



HEGEL'S GRAMMATICAL ONTOLOGY

Vanishing Words and Hermeneutical Openness in the
Phenomenology of Spirit

JEFFREY REID

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BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

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First published in Great Britain 2021

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-3502-1359-3
ePDF: 978-1-3502-1360-9
eBook: 978-1-3502-1361-6

Typeset by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.

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To my loved ones

“Through experience, meaning has become different from what
it was meant to mean.”

Hegel, Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

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PREFACE

I am not sure what distinguishes a preface from an introduction. Both are meant to “introduce” the content of a book, to prepare the reader for what is to come. If we refer to Hegel’s Introduction and Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, then we might say that the former fulfills a more objective, scientific, or theoretical role, whereas the latter seems more specifically aimed at the reader, anticipating objections in a way that appears to recognize the originality of the *Phenomenological* project that follows. In many ways, the Preface reads as if it were written in response to “readers’ reports” from an academic publisher. This is obviously not the case, since, to my knowledge, no one but Hegel read the *Phenomenology*’s manuscript before it was sent to be published.

In the case of this present book, I choose “Preface” because, aware of the originality of my project, I want to anticipate and hopefully allay at least some of the objections and confusions that readers may have regarding my approach. Of course, this does not mean there will not be objections or critiques. The worst that can happen is that there be no reaction at all! Still, I would like the reader to at least approach my work here with a certain hermeneutical openness, one that is, in fact, a dominant theme of the present book. As for the scientific, scholarly “introduction,” beyond the theoretical summary that I will provide in these pages, I invite the interested reader to consult my published work on Hegel and language, specifically the first two chapters of my book *Real Words: Language and System in Hegel* (2007). In those chapters (reprinted from other peer-reviewed contexts), I present the detailed theoretical underpinnings for what I take to be Hegel’s idea of scientific language and his notion of grammatical ontology, the details of which I can only sketch out here.

To summarize, in “The Objective Discourse of Science” chapter of *Real Words*, I explore the question of objective truth inherent within the Hegelian system, as it is presented in his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. I show how truth, in this context, is not a matter of correspondence between language and a divorced, substantial reality, whether material or ideal. Rather, for Hegel, true scientific (systematic) objectivity takes place in the discourse of Science (*Wissenschaft*) itself. Such an idea of scientific discourse or logos relies first and foremost on a theory of language that we find presented in the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* book of the *Encyclopedia*, which I refer to in *Real Words*. Basically, the idea of objective language in Hegelian Science revolves around the distinction between the linguistic sign (*Zeichen*) *per se*, that is, the raw signifiers that Hegel also sometimes calls “names” (*Namen*), and, on the other hand, what he generally refers to as “words” (*Worten*). Thus, when, in the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* (section 464), Hegel writes, “The existence, as name, needs an Other, [i.e.] meaning

from the representing intelligence, in order to be the significant thing [*die Sache*], true objectivity,” the “significant thing” that he is referring to is what he means by “word.” This claim is supported in the previous *Encyclopedia* section, where we find: that “names as such [are] meaningless words.”

Although Hegel’s use of the term is not always rigorous, signs (names or signifiers) are, for Hegel, natural, immediate and largely arbitrary entities; words are more significant. They are, in fact, empty signs that have been invested with thought. Put briefly, thought invests linguistic signs (found immediately there) with meaning to produce words. Of course, words alone do not Science make. Rather, as meaningful entities, they take place in greater grammatical structures of significance: in sentences (propositions, judgments) and, finally, in the ultimate Hegelian grammatical structure: the syllogism, which is the perfected (*vollkommene*) form of what he calls the concept. Anyone doubting this outcome should reread the last sentence of the “Judgment” chapter of the *Greater Logic*: “By virtue of this fulfillment of the copula, the judgment form has become the syllogism.” Understanding what exactly Hegel means by the “fulfillment of the copula,” in the *Phenomenological* setting, is a crucial theme of this present book.

I will return to the question of the copula in a minute. For now, I would like to briefly revisit the notion of “fulfillment or filling” (*Erfüllung*), mentioned in the sentence above. The idea of “filling” obviously implies content, and this is a key aspect of Hegel’s notion of objectively true discourse, of the logos that he calls Science. If we take Science itself as the most perfected (*vollkommene*) form of the syllogism, then we must expect this form to be thoroughly fulfilled with content. Further, if we respect the grammatical foundation of judgment (*Urteil*) as the fundamental structure that comes to inform the systematic syllogism, then it becomes necessary to see how the syllogistic embodiment of Science derives its content from forms of judgment. Since the *Encyclopedia* itself espouses the syllogistic form of a universal moment (the *Logic*), a moment of particularity (Nature), and a culminating singular moment (Spirit), it should be apparent that the content with which this syllogistic structure is fulfilled is discursive in nature, that is, made up of discourses that take place in the grammatical form of judgment and are meaningful within the system of Science itself. The content of Science consists of real words, invested with meaning (thought) through judgment, and therefore *not* merely consisting in arbitrary linguistic signs. What are the discourses that form the content of Science?

The discourses of Science are the actual texts upon which philosophical thought reflects and which form its content. The philosophy of history, for example, does not reflect abstractly on human time and events but rather on the actual historiographical texts that tell their story; the philosophy of nature does not reflect generally on the things of nature themselves but rather on the actual texts of natural science; the philosophy of religion considers sacred artistic expressions and doctrinal texts, and so on. Of course, the question arises: what makes these constitutive texts themselves objectively true? Why Goethe and not Newton? The answer to this is fundamental. In Hegel, greater narrative structures confer meaning on the discourses that form the content of those structures. Ultimately,

it is because, for example, linguistic expressions of law fit into the narrative of objective spirit, aka the narrative of Hegelian freedom, which, in turn, fits into the narrative of Spirit as a whole, that law constitutes an objective content of Science. Goethe's chiaroscuro notion of color is more conceptually meaningful, within the Hegelian narrative of natural science, than is Newton's fragmentary, analytic one.

The relation between content and scientific form is reciprocal and organic, that is, integrated and integral. While the systematic narrative confers meaning on the discrete contents, the discursive objectivity of those contents confers truth and objectivity on the grand narrative structure. Drawing a literary parallel, Mr. Darcy's incidental comments on Elizabeth at the ball in Meryton only become significant in light of *Pride and Prejudice's* carried out narrative arc, which, reciprocally, would not be the same without the initial contretemps that Darcy's comments occasion. For those who might worry that my literary example shows Hegel's theory of truth to be overly "coherence" rather than "correspondence," I would add that the empirical content of Science is nonetheless supplied by the discourses of the positive sciences (e.g., of nature) upon which Hegelian philosophy reflects.

In the second chapter of my *Real Words*, I present Hegel's "Ontological Grasp of Judgment." This idea is fundamental to Hegel, in general, and certainly informs the book that you are currently reading on the grammatical ontology of the *Phenomenology*. First, "judgment" is a grammatical term that refers to a linguistic proposition (*Satz*). Judgment thus presents a relation between the grammatical subject and the predicate through the copula "is." The fulfillment of the copula in judgment, by which the syllogism comes about, and which Hegel refers to in the above-quoted passage from his *Greater Logic*, involves the "determinate connection" between the subject and the predicate, as he writes in the penultimate sentence of the Judgment chapter. The determinate nature of the copula, of the "is" between subject and predicate, bespeaks its fulfillment, whereby it will become the moment of particularity within the Hegelian syllogism. To illustrate, in the terms of the purely *formal* syllogism (which is not Hegel's), the determination according to which the *particular* species of "all men" shares the general quality of being mortal allows the syllogism to arrive at its conclusion, that Socrates, as a singular man, is mortal. However, in Hegel's systematic Science, the syllogistic structure is fully ontological, articulating the movement of his famous concept, according to which the agency of thought determines itself in and through the particular moment of otherness, in order to be reconciled in the singular, holistic grasp of itself as having carried out this determinate movement. The content of Science should thus be seen as arising from the different ways in which thought addresses its Other and recognizes itself therein. The fulfillment of this movement, whereby self-identity is only realized through the organic grasp of difference, is first carried out in the copula of the judgment form.

In the "Ontological Grasp of Judgment" chapter of *Real Words*, I show how taking the copula "is" as performative of actual existence is arrived at by conceiving *Subjekt* in both the grammatical and psychical acceptance of the term. I show how Hegel, in making this move, is inspired by Fichte's fundamental proposition for all Science, the famous *Ich bin Ich* ($I = I$), however as read

through the interpretive lens of Hegel's old friend, Hölderlin, in his short but foundational text *Urteil und Sein* (Judgment and Being). Fichte's proposition, taken as the expression of the absolute I, does indeed express the self-positing agency of subjective thought per se in the linguistic terms of a judgment, where "I" is *Subjekt* in both senses of the word. What Hölderlin contributes, in his short text, which is a critical commentary on Fichte's founding proposition, is the crucial idea that the copula, the " = " between the subject "I" and the predicate "I," is not merely a statement of identity but always also an affirmation of difference, not just of self-identity but also of self-differing. Otherwise, why have the copula at all? If the copula were simply an expression of identity, we could simply say "I"? Further, Hölderlin shows how it is through this interplay between identity and difference in the copula that existing, determinate Being arises. To be is necessarily to be *both* what is and what is not. That is precisely what "determinate" means and why it arises in the copula, which thus shows itself to be ontological.

Contemporary philosophers in what is referred to as "the analytic tradition" will doubtlessly find the idea that the grammatical copula has ontological weight either puzzling or downright wrong-headed. Even among those present-day readers with an abiding interest in Hegel and German Idealism, the ontological nature of judgment may still be unfamiliar and appear unlikely. Perhaps this is because of an enduring tendency to read Hegel as a neo-Kantian, non-metaphysical philosopher and thus to accept as conclusive Kant's criticism of the ontological argument for the existence of God, in the first *Critique*, where he explicitly cautions against taking the copula as anything other than an empty sign of identity. And yes, Hegel's *Scientific* take on the copula is indeed informed by its metaphysical use in the ontological argument, where the statement "God is being," to use the example from the Preface to the *Phenomenology* (M62/W3 59),¹ does indeed promote the "is" as the expression of *existing* reality.

Looking at the ontological nature of judgment in a more anthropological, and perhaps more familiar way, it may be helpful to see Fichte's first principle ($I = I$) as simply stating the factual reality of human subjective thought. Indeed, this fundamental intuition, already at play in Kant's notion of ideal causation, is shared by Hegel, and when students ask me about the nature of his idealism, I tend to express its fundamental principle in these terms: belief in the agency of thought. In other words, far from asserting that "everything is ideal," Hegel's absolute idealism rests on this core tenet. Thought has agency; in fact, thought *is* agency. Without this, the whole system is meaningless. But what does such agency imply?

First of all, we must accept that there *is* something called thought and that it is associated with selfhood. Second, we must accept that thought is not just a private calculative, passive feature of data processing but that it comes out of our heads, into the world, which it configures, determines, or, using Hegel's term, *negates*, in a way that actively transforms its objects into something more thought-ful and more meaningful than what was initially and immediately found there. The agency of thought might be thought of as a kind of phenomenological intentionality, for readers more familiar with that vein of contemporary philosophy.

Crucially, I recognize that, for Hegel, the agency of thought is performative in and through language. It is through the medium of language that thought determines its worlds. Why? Because when thought takes possession of linguistic signs to form words, its ideal agency becomes real and actual in the world. If asked for proof of the agency of thought, Hegel might simply have answered, “spirit,” which we may translate as “the existing, self-knowing, humanly produced, historically developed, cultural reality of the world that we live in.” As the discursive instantiation of thought, spirit must therefore be open to linguistic interpretation.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* recounts this development (of spirit), up to a reality that Hegel calls Science, which is presented, after the *Phenomenology*, in his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. Whereas my earlier efforts, in *Real Words*, dealt mainly with how the objectivity of language is meant to inform Science, the present book deals with forms of language that are involved in the development of spirit, as defined in the paragraph above. These forms or figures (*Gestalten*) present themselves throughout Hegel’s *Phenomenological* work. If language can be said, generally, to mediate our thinking relations to the world (through the agency of thought) and given that Hegel’s *Phenomenology* describes such relations in terms of consciousness, in terms of the relation between the thinking subject and its objects, then language must be involved in each of the forms of consciousness that is presented in the *Phenomenological* epic. And this is my goal: to discover and show how each form of consciousness involves and reveals itself as a form of language.

Furthermore, taking seriously the ontological nature of judgment (*Urteil*) means seeing the *Subjekt*, in both its psychical and grammatical senses, as positing itself in an object that is, at the same time, its predicate. Such a positing (*Setzen*) can thus be thought of as a proposition (*Satz*), a move that allows us to apprehend the conscious relations between subject and object, which form the content and movement of the *Phenomenology* generally, as involving ontological relations between the grammatical subject and its predicate. This is the grammatical ontology that I refer to in the title of the book. It means that the different forms of consciousness that Hegel describes, that is, the different ways that selfhood actually takes place in and configures the world, and how the world determines the self, can be apprehended in grammatical terms. Briefly, the different relations between the grammatical-psychical subjects and their predicates configure different forms of consciousness that are linguistically instantiated. The resulting forms of language engender specific worldly configurations that express the conscious relationship between selfhood and objective otherness. These forms arise in the copula, apprehended as the real and actual interplay between subject and predicate, between selfhood and objectivity.

The predicative agency of thought, the way the subject determines its predicate/object, implies a specific relation and thus a certain conception of the copula, of the “is” between subject and predicate, which, according to Hegel’s ontological grammar, brings about a form of existing social reality. I say “social” because even when the form of consciousness under consideration is radically individualistic, as language, the reality evoked is immediately shared or communal. Even when “private,” the ontological nature of language determines that it has social reach.

The linguistic realities of the *Phenomenology* constitute as many worlds, that is, specific configurations between human thought and objectivity. Language, according to Hegel's grammatical ontology, is indeed performative and shared, and the reality of its performance arises in the "copulative" relation between subject and predicate. While each figure of consciousness visited in the *Phenomenology* involves a communal or societal figure that is ontologically constituted and recognizable through the grammatical relation between subject and predicate, of course, not all communities are created equal. Otherwise, there would be no *Phenomenological* story to tell, no narrative arc. The inherently social or shared aspect of grammatical ontology is what allows us to examine Hegel's figures of consciousness with reference to their degree of hermeneutical openness, a fundamental idea of this book, which I will return to below.

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel presents his notion of grammatical ontology in the Preface, particularly in the sections (M59–66/W3, 56–62), where we discover his idea of the speculative proposition or sentence (*Satz*) or, we can say, judgment (*Urteil*). In fact, I could claim that the present book is a protracted commentary on these few but fundamental pages. Briefly, in the "speculative sentence" section of the Preface, Hegel juxtaposes two forms of philosophical language. The first, which he associates with "representation" (*Vorstellung*) and which is unfortunately often translated as "picture-thinking," relies on a grammatical form where the subject takes the predicate as an accidental, infinitely determinable substance. Hegel describes such representational language as an exercise in "vanity," since what the thinking, grammatical subject is really doing is projecting itself into the predicate, which is apprehended as an empty, arbitrarily determinable linguistic sign, standing before the subject as its object.

On the other hand, the speculative approach to the proposition (or judgment) sees that the subjective determination undergone by the predicate (as substance) has actually conferred selfhood upon it, in such a way that now the predicate can be seen as subject and where what was formerly subject consequently now becomes the predicate. This reciprocal, "speculative" predicative action is described by Hegel as involving a *Gegenstoss* (counter-thrust), wherein the "Subject has passed over into the Predicate" (M60/W3, 57).

The thing is this: given the ontological nature of the subject–predicate relation, the speculative proposition constitutes its own grammatical ontology, observable in the way the copula is now conceived. Whereas, in the reflective grammar of representative language, the predicative content of the unilaterally subjective and self-identical "I" is described in terms of "vanity" and "futility," the *speculative* proposition brings about a "harmony" of both identity and difference, a "floating center" (M61/W3, 59) of meaning. In the speculatively grasped copula, as Hegel puts it in fittingly ambiguous terms, "we learn that we meant something other than what we meant to mean" (M62). In clearer terms, whereas the reflective proposition expresses the unilateral, dogmatic opinion of the subject/self, which it imposes upon the predicate/object, the speculative proposition allows the predicate to speak for itself. The result is an ambiguity of meaning that takes place *in the copula itself*, in the ambiguous relationship

between subject and predicate. This relationship is one where identity is fully enlivened by difference, and whose multiplication of meaning involves an essential openness to interpretation, which I refer to as hermeneutical openness.

Further, the ontological nature of the copula, the performative reality of the “is,” carries over onto its level of speculative ambiguity and openness. Grasping the copula ontologically consequently allows us to conceive of its fulfilment in communal/societal realities, which display particular features of openness and “harmony” that are possible only through the recognition of Hölderlin’s insight into the essential differentiation within predicative self-identity. The present book seeks to demonstrate that this is what Hegel intends as the outcome of the *Phenomenological* epic, in the Absolute Knowing chapter: Science as a communal form of hermeneutical openness wherein difference is the essential animating element of identity.

Such a conclusion implies that the *Phenomenology* should be read as a series of attempts at communities of hermeneutical openness, a series that only makes sense considering its achieved culmination in Science. Following Hegel’s argument, we can here anticipate the communal embodiment of such an ambiguously open, discursive reality where the Scientific verb is fully at play, and if the reader has the patience to follow me to the end, I will present the form that I believe this community actually takes, in the last chapter. Of course, the logic of the Hegelian narrative means that such an ending, in the fully speculative community, sheds light on and makes meaningful all the other figures that have led to its realization.

The title of this book contains the expression *Vanishing Words*. While the meaning of this phrase will be discussed over the book’s course, let me make a few introductory remarks. Essentially, “vanishing” (*verschwinden*) is what words do. First, they are spoken, written, expressed, and, as such, really *are* something. They exist in the world. However, they begin vanishing as soon as they are articulated or pronounced, a feature that is easily grasped in the evanescence of the spoken word, whose sound evaporates into thin air, and, although its perdurance may be more lasting, even the written word is temporal and finite. The pages yellow and decay; the parchment crumbles into dust. The manuscript is lost; the book is out-of-print. In today’s culture of the digitally configured word, the finite temporality of written language should be pressingly evident.

Perhaps more fundamentally, words are always past. They are read or spoken. Words are in time and, as such, are only *for* a time. Significantly, in Hegel, the vanishing of words confers on them an essential aspect of “having been.” I write “essential” because the truth or essence of things in general, and of words in particular, is revealed through their “having been,” and thus through their vanishing. *Wesen ist gewesen*, to repeat Hegel’s mantra. Essence is what has been. Although the term “essence” may appear spooky and metaphysical, in the context of language and words, we can say that it simply denotes “meaning.” Thus, for Hegel, the meaning of things is revealed in their vanishing. Words are meaningful things (*Sachen*). The meaning of words is revealed in their vanishing, in their “having been.”

Above, I mentioned how Hegel defines “words” over against linguistic “signs.” I said that words were signs invested with thought. The essential vanishing feature of words means that this investment is finite and temporary. Thought always outstrips the word in which it takes place, simply because words are always embodied in finite signs. The vanishing of the word, its quality of having been said, heard, written, read, and so on releases thought in the form of meaning. Briefly, the vanishing of words is a necessary condition for meaning. Meaning spills out of vanishing words, which, consequently, are never definitive. Therefore, an essential condition for hermeneutical interpretation is the vanishing of words, leaving behind the empty signs that they invested (predicated) in the first place.

Over against such vanishing, linguistic signs represent natural, finite entities. And according to Hegel’s take on natural entities, they may “die” but their death is, in itself, without significance or meaning. Signs may evolve over time. Hobbes may have written “wee” for “we” or “softnesse” for “softness” but as linguistic signifiers, these idiosyncrasies have no effect on the meaning. Meaning is a feature of words, which always outstrips them, spills out of them in their vanishing and is never definitively set. In spite of their natural finitude or perhaps because of it, signs have a stubborn persistence. They change slowly and contingently over time, like mountains or glaciers. Linguistic signs, as Hegel writes in his report on state education to the counsellor Niethammer, are, in this regard, like so many “stones or coals” (W4, 415).

What do vanishing words have to do with the speculative proposition that I briefly introduced above? As I explained, the speculative way of looking at language, in Hegel, involves a reciprocity whereby the predicate is allowed subjective agency and the subject allows itself to become the object of the Other’s predication. Since predication is that act through which signs are invested with meaning to become words, we can say that reciprocal predication brings about the constitution of words, which, as I also stated, are essentially vanishing. Further, as vanishing, words are outstripped by their meaning. Consequently, the reciprocal interplay of speculative predication brings about an ontologically determined space of ambiguous meaning, in the “floating center” that Hegel situates in the copula of judgment. The hermeneutical openness in the speculative copula depends on the vanishing of words, where meaning constantly outstrips their existence as past, as having been. And the vanishing of words implies the essential ambiguity of meaning, where the predicated Other is given voice, allowing figures of hermeneutical openness to present themselves in the *Phenomenology*’s forms of consciousness.

The dogmatism that Hegel associates with representational language does not admit such speculative reciprocity and openness. The predicate remains the object upon which subjective qualities are visited as accidents. The vanity of unilateral predication, whereby the subject jealously keeps predicative agency for itself, may indeed produce words but these are just empty reflections of its own subjective vacuity and, as such, are never really more than the arbitrary signs of its dogmatic assignment. The fact that dogmatism attempts to set “in stone” its meanings, according to its own exclusive predicative agency, to selfishly maintain them

without admitting or even hearing the voice of otherness, reflects the ultimate status of its discourse as consisting of dead signs. Dogmatism is indeed *dogmatic*.

Such critical observations are not confined to the epistemological province. The ontological nature of the predicative rapport, as reflected in the performative reality of the copula, means that the discourse of dogmatism brings about worlds whose only substance is the background noise of ceaseless, opinionated chatter and demagoguery. The *Phenomenology* shows how such language-worlds, by the unilateral, non-speculative nature of their identities, while generally harmless, are always in danger of collapsing into proto-fascistic communities that are exclusive of difference. Systematic Science, through the actuality of its hermeneutically differentiated copula, is meant to guard against such outcomes, both epistemologically and politically.

The present book:

I have been reading and writing about Hegel for over thirty years. I have had the pleasure of leading graduate seminars on all the major works of Hegel's mature philosophical system, and twice now, on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Of course, my background in Hegel studies does not guarantee that what I write here is true or even likely. Readers must decide for themselves, based on the clarity of my arguments and the references to the actual Hegel text. What my years of Hegel studies do guarantee me is a general fatigue regarding footnotes! While the numerous scholarly articles that I have published on Hegel, over the years, are appropriately larded with references to texts from all branches of his work, to his contemporaries and, importantly, to other commentators, here, in the present book, I largely spare myself and my reader such excursions. Nonetheless, in the long time that I have been reflecting on this project, I have gained many valuable insights from my reading of other Hegel scholars and I have included references to their important monographic contributions in the bibliographical "Other Voices" section at the end. Indeed, that section should perhaps be read as one lengthy footnote to this whole book. As a guide to readers wishing to juxtapose the commentary of the *Phenomenology* that I am offering with those of their favorite commentators of the work or with their own interpretations, the titles and subtitles of this present book refer to Hegel's original text, which provides the narrative progression that I follow.

With a few exceptions, the reference notes in the present book are solely to the text of the *Phenomenology*, and that, by citing the indispensable paragraph numbers established by A. V. Miller in his English translation, along with passing references to Volume 3 in the Suhrkamp *Werke in 20 Bänden*, as I mentioned in a (rare) footnote, above. When I refer, in passing, to my own published work that further develops specific aspects that are relevant to this current enterprise, it is also to give the reader the opportunity to explore references that I do not cite here.

In its title, I almost called the book that you are reading an "Essay," a word derived from the French "essayer," which means "to attempt." *Hegel's Grammatical Ontology* is my attempt to present the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in a new light and to contribute to the ongoing and indeed never-ending trajectory of that work's interpretation. In the French essay tradition, the structure of the argument itself is

meant to carry more persuasive weight than do references to secondary sources. As well, the French essay encourages a personal, first-person aspect in the authorial voice, one which is meant to resonate rhetorically in the mind of the reader. Acknowledging the “subjective” aspect of the essay-form immediately implies the active participation of another, of the reader. Indeed, following the argument of this book, it is only in the open hermeneutical interplay between me and you that a form of scientific objectivity or community may really take place, one where the meaning of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* outstrips its always vanishing words.

Chapter 1

SENSE-CERTAINTY: “HERE” AND “NOW” AS VANISHING WORDS

In the beginning was the word. Or is it the sign? Which comes first? My onto-grammatical reading of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* depends on a crucial distinction: the difference between the linguistic sign and the word, and how they are related. In order to make the distinction, we must introduce other key players in the *Phenomenology*’s language game: the proposition (or sentence = *Satz*), the form of judgment (*Urteil*), subject, predicate and the verb “to be” that relates one to the other, otherwise known as the copula. Sense-certainty puts all these linguistic elements, first introduced by Hegel in his Preface’s reflections on speculative language (M59-66/W3, 56–62), into play. I discussed the “speculative sentence” above, in my own Preface to the present book. However, in the chapter on Sense-certainty, we begin to appreciate the ontological dimension of speculative grammar, how the *Subjekt* is meant in both a linguistic and psychical way, that is, as pertaining to selfhood, and how the predicate is related to it as an object against which the subject measures itself. In Sense-certainty we will see that such an encounter is not moot, that in acting as the object in which the subject predicates itself, the predicate is indeed “acting.” As the reflection of subjective determination, the predicate is already inchoately intimating an agency of its own.

Further, Hegel’s first chapter (and ours) helps us begin to appreciate the ethical ramifications of his *Phenomenological* grammar. Because the discursive features that I just mentioned have real *being* (are ontological), they therefore take place in the world in a performative fashion, mediate our ways of being together, and hence have ethical import. Let us begin with a brief overview of the Sense-certainty chapter.¹ Then, I will show how it lends itself to the linguistic reading that I am putting forward, where vanishing words are meaningful. In the subsequent chapters, I will not always proceed this way. However, in Sense-certainty, Hegel’s argument hinges so evidently on linguistic elements, that its outline is immediately pertinent to the onto-grammatical reading.

Sense-certainty presents itself as the richest and truest form of knowing. According to its way of apprehending the world, we seem to experience a rich diversity of things that are given to us immediately, through our senses, in each instance of our lives, in space and time. These sensuous things strike us as absolutely certain, in an unreflected fashion. We do not have to think about them. Things are, and they strike us as such immediately, in all their apparent diversity.

We will discover, however, that things are not as they appear. What appears as rich and variegated is actually impoverished and bland. What appears immediately as most certain reveals itself to be the least true.

In sense-certainty, we seem to experience objects immediately, and this immediacy seems to guarantee the truth of this form of knowing. Hegel wants to show us that this immediate certainty is not as simple as it appears. In fact, it involves a dynamic relationship between two terms: the self and a certain type of objectivity, that is, a certain way of experiencing the world. The mutual involvement between these two terms implies that each one actually determines what the other is, and thus the truth of what appeared as an immediate form of knowing turns out to be an act of reciprocal mediation. To the extent that we grasp this dynamic inter-dependency of subject and object, we will come up with a new, richer object of knowledge, the object of perception, which is dealt with in the next chapter. There, we will discover a more involved, reflected relation between our object of knowing and ourselves as knowing subjects. However, first, we must come to see that, as a form of knowledge, sense-certainty is deficient.

In sense-certainty, the object presents itself to me immediately as an absolutely singular thing, whose singularity I denote by adding the indexical "this." The thing of sense-certainty is always "this thing," if indeed I am to capture the essential singularity of the sensuous experience. For, here, in this presentation of raw empiricism, things always strike me singularly, as events, and the relation between the "I" and the object of the senses is consequently unique or singular. As well, the experience of this singular thing is always *for* a singular "I." When I refer to "this tree" that I see before me, I am involved in an exclusive relationship with the thing that I mean. The exclusive nature of my relationship to the sensuous thing reflects its singularity back on me. Thus, the singular object is always for the singular I. The I that means "this tree" is always "this I" and no other, allowing Hegel to play on the German word "Meinen" (= to mean/to point out and the possessive pronoun "mine"). The object that I mean or point out, when I say "this," is always for me or exclusively mine. We might say that in sense-certainty, a pure "this" (this object) presents itself immediately to the singular "I," which is another "this" (this me). Consequently, the always singular object of the senses brings about a singular self who experiences or knows that object. At this point, we can use "object" and "thing" (*Ding*) interchangeably, since they are thoroughly indeterminate in the immediacy of the experience.

In order to explore the truth of the relationship, Hegel allows to play out the dialectical method that he announces in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology* (M85-7, W377-80), one where "the ambiguity of truth" (M86) produces "two objects" (ibid.). We will come to see how such *Zweideutigkeit* (ambiguity) is a fundamental feature of the onto-grammatical project. However, generally, the ambiguous dialectic involves first seeking essential truth (in-itself) in the object of knowledge, then, not finding it in this unilateral aspect, searching for it in the subjective process of knowing, which is then taken as a "second" object. In the current context, Hegel first inquires whether the truth (aka the essence or the in-itself) that our knowledge seeks lies in the object of the senses. Inevitably, it

does not. Then he looks at whether the truth resides in the knowing subject itself, where it also does not. Finally, we discover that the truth resides in the dynamic and ambiguous inter-relation between the subject and the object, in their mutual mediation, which is then conceived as a new object of knowing, in Perception (along with a “new” subject who knows it).

To begin, we must therefore look at the object (M94/W3, 84). Is the object essential? Does the object in-itself hold the truth? Is it really the truth in-itself? In other words, does the object that strikes my senses carry its truth with it, striking me with its truth as it strikes my senses? No. What strikes my senses is not really the singular object that I mean but rather a pure “thisness.” In other words, the singularity of the sense object can only be captured when I refer to it as “this object.” Any and every sense object always presents itself to me as a “this,” under the banner of a *general* demonstrative term that linguistically contradicts the supposed singularity of the object to be known. In other words still, the “this” is the only way to determine the singularity of the object/thing that is to be known, and “this” is totally indeterminate. Consequently, the question that we should be asking ourselves, according to Hegel, is not “what is the object?” but, rather, what is the “this” that allows me to *mean* the individual object? Regarding the object, the “this” represents how it presents itself to the knowing subject in terms of time or space, that is, in terms of “here” and “now.” Hegel then analyzes these two components of the “this” in order to discover if there is anything in “here” and “now” beyond the indeterminate generality of “this.”

This singular thing presents itself in time. What seems certain is that we know something through the senses as appearing before us *now*. The “now” is essential to the certainty with which the object immediately strikes us. I know what it is because I see it now. Nothing could be more certain. If the tree that I witness is not before me now, it is not “this tree.” But Hegel asks us to perform an experiment. At night, say “now is night” and then write it down. “Truth cannot lose anything by being written down,” remarks Hegel (M95), in what must surely be the most ironical statement found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*! For, as we will see, already in Sense-certainty and further throughout the *Phenomenology*, this act of “writing down,” of putting into words, is indeed the privileged way to reveal the actual meaning of any knowledge experience.

Here, when the next morning, we look at the paper that we have written on, and read that “now is noon,” we see that the statement on the paper is false. Language shows us that the “now does not preserve itself” (M96), or, rather, the fixed content of the now does not preserve itself. The same word, “now,” means two different things: both last night and today. In fact, all that is left is the general, indeterminate “now,” the universal “now” of the word itself. Language shows us that the truth of the word “now” and hence of our experience of the singular, sensuous object as immediately present in time is just as fleeting as the original “this” that we began with. As soon as I think or say, “now is the tree,” the “now” is no longer the tree that I mean (or meant!). The punctual “now” of that experience breaks down into an infinite number of “nows” and finally, into a general, even universal “now” (M107/W3, 89).

Hegel then performs the same experiment on the “here.” For example, I witness a tree, (M98/W3, 85) but when I turn around and look elsewhere, the tree has gone. No tree is here, but a house instead. In this shift, the only thing that remains is again the indeterminate and general “here” itself. The singular object I meant has lost its meaning. When I attempt to point out the “here,” as I did with the “now,” that is, when I point out this tree here, for example, I am again confronted with a manifold of “heres.” I may point out this tree as the singular one that I mean, but as a singular object, it is only “here” because it is presented in an infinite web of other “heres.” It is above, below, left, right, further above, further below, further left or right, and so on. Again, in physically pointing out the object before me as “here,” the “here” breaks down into an infinity of “heres” and, finally, into universal, indeterminate “hereness,” just as the “now” did. So, the analysis of “here” and “now” confirms the indeterminacy of the “this,” on the side of the object. That is, “this” singular object of my senses fails as an unambiguous object of true knowledge.

Perhaps the truth of the relation of sense-certainty resides in the self. Perhaps the truth (essence or in-itself) of this form of knowledge (of consciousness) takes place in *me*, in the knowing subject. It is because this tree is the one that *I* mean, that it is truly certain and true. “Sense-certainty is driven back into the I” (M100/W3, 86), as Hegel puts it. Perhaps the truth of the knowing is in what I mean (*meine*). The object is certain because it is mine (*mein*), because I mean it. I indicate it. Now is the day, because *I* see it. Here, is the tree because *I* mean it. However, the problem is that my “I” is immediately determined by the here (or the now) that it means! The “I” that is certain of the house is not necessarily the “I” that is certain of the tree. My sensuous experience breaks down into a multitude of singular I’s, each one *meaning* something different. I may *mean* a single “I,” but according to the fleeting nature of sense-certainty’s singular experiences, what I say is not what I mean. When I say “I see the tree,” the I is indeterminate. Its meaning evaporates with the thing that it means.

Hegel’s reasoning here may be hard to grasp. It is important to recall that the “I” that we are considering at this stage is the self as immediately experiencing singular objects of the senses and nothing more. We are not talking about self-reflective self-consciousness, for example, but rather of an unreflected immediate form of selfness that simply receives individual objects through the senses as present and certain. In this sense, the “I” that sees and means this tree is nothing other than an I “full of this tree,” we might say. The *my-ness* or consciousness is entirely given over to what it means, this tree. Consequently, when the singularity of the tree that is meant breaks down into an indeterminate universal, this also reveals the truth about the self that *means* “this tree.” Given the reciprocal (phenomenological) relation between the knowing self and the object of knowledge, where the knowing subject is always conscious of something and the object of knowledge is always the object of a knowing subject, it should be no surprise that the emptiness of the object of sense-certainty reflects upon and into the knower of that object. This is why Hegel can refer to sense-certainty as a form of consciousness. Here, in the knowing subject, the emptiness of the knowledge experience produces a form of

hunger, which spills over into the practical (i.e., ethical) realm. I will discuss this ethical dimension below. First, I want to emphasize and develop the linguistic elements that Hegel presents us with, through his repeated references to “writing down,” “saying,” “describing” (M95, 97, 110).

The things of sense-certainty first present themselves to us as linguistic signs. As I mentioned in the Preface, I have written, in several contexts, on the difference between “sign” and “word” in Hegel, particularly with reference to his discussion of language in the *Encyclopedia’s Philosophy of Spirit*. Here, I will simply reiterate that although Hegel is somewhat less than rigorous in his use of the terms, he significantly employs the term “sign” (*Zeichen*) when referring to the pure, empty, indeterminate linguistic signifier. He sometimes uses the German “Name” in the same way. As linguistic signifiers, signs are predominantly natural entities. They are divorced from mind-ful (spiritual) content. They are like “coals and stones” (Letter/Report on state education to Niethammer, W4, 415), which the mind simply finds there, ripe for predicated meaning. While signs may indeed change over time, for example, the English “h-a-t-h” may become “h-a-s” or the German “U-r-t-h-e-i-l” (judgment) may become “U-r-t-e-i-l,” these changes are brought about by usage or, rather, through what the French mean by *usage*, which implies a gradual wearing away or erosion through repeated use. In Hegel, the transformations brought about in signs are no different from the natural erosion that shapes pebbles in a stream. As natural entities, signs are singular and even stubbornly individual, a difference that I will elucidate further on. Like the things of nature, again for Hegel, they only change reluctantly, and often, very little at all. Children of romanticism, it is hard for us to conceive of natural things as unchanging, ossified, and even *lifeless* but that is indeed the case for the idealist, for whom lively change is brought about by the agency of thought.

In sense-certainty, my cognitive experience is reduced to the apprehension of linguistic signs: “table,” “chair,” “tree,” “day,” “night.” As such, they are thoroughly singular and thus indeterminate or meaningless, occurring to me in all their inevitability. However, as a subject, I seek to know them, to make them meaningful for me, and to do so, I add the demonstrative pronoun (indexical) “this.” The “this” is meant to elevate the sign to the level of the word, a sign that has been invested with thought or with meaning. This movement bespeaks the essence of Hegel’s idealism: the agency of thought. As we find everywhere throughout the system that he refers to as Science, thought overcomes what it confronts as immediate and natural, negating it, determining it and yet conserving it in a reborn, more spiritual embodiment. The same is true in language, generally. Thought finds readily available linguistic signs and, in investing them with meaning, overcomes their immediate, natural singularity, thus rendering them meaningful words. The distinction between sign and word is fragile simply because the sign is rarely, if ever, encountered in its pure, natural, immediate state. In our world, signs are almost always already invested with meaning and, as such, are words. However, to express the conceptual dynamism of language, its scientific successes, and its necessary failures, it is necessary to comprehend the distinction between linguistic signs and words.

The fragility of the rapport between signs and words is also due to the fact that words never lose their original status of sign. Words need signs like living beings need their bodies and to lose one's body is to lose one's life. Words always require their bodily signs. Reciprocally, when life is lost, the body is what is left and, as we will see, this is also a feature of words in their vanishing. The vital and even organic dimension of speculative language will become more evident in later figures of the *Phenomenology* that we will explore together, unless, of course, you lose patience with me! However, for now, it is crucial to grasp the lively complicity that is at play between signs and words, a complicity that absolutely demands their distinction.

The title of this book refers to words as “vanishing” (*Verschwinden*), a term that reoccurs constantly, in numerous settings throughout the *Phenomenology*. This is not an accidental feature, some regrettable transitory aspect of our contemporary world, for example. As we will see in more detail in later chapters, *vanishing* is an essential feature of what words are. It is what most distinguishes them from signs per se. And this is simply because meaning always outstrips the words that it inhabits. Meaning, as thought, can never be absolutely contained and exhausted in a word. In fact, it is the *natural* aspect of the inhabited word (its sign/body) that always contravenes its meaningful content, which must spill out beyond it. The word is thus always defined by its finitude, by its vanishing. To the extent that words are alive, their vanishing begins with their utterance. Such vanishing is therefore not something alien and “bad” and limiting that happens to words. Rather, vanishing is a condition for their meaningfulness, which must therefore be construed as hermeneutically open, to the extent that meaning can never be fully captured and enclosed in a finite word. Finally, it is because meaning spills out beyond words, that is, that words are never absolutely definitive, that reinterpretation (of signs) is always possible and, indeed, present. I will return to these ideas throughout the book and hopefully they will become clearer as we put more *Phenomenological* flesh on their bones. Let us now look more closely at how words and their vanishing apply to Sense-certainty.

As I have shown in more scholarly detail, in the above-referenced article where I relate Sense-certainty to Hobbes's theory of language and its ethical ramifications, what Hegel is criticizing in his first chapter is nominalist/materialist empiricism. According to this view, there is no distance or difference between the things that I receive in my mind, through my senses, and the words that are attached to them. In both cases, individual “names,” to use Hobbes's terminology (“Namen,” to use Hegel's), are tied to individual sense data, and there is no difference between “names” and “words.” For the Hobbesian nominalist, all words are names assigned to singular things that are received through the senses. “Tree” is always “this tree.” Hegel shows the contradiction in this view. The language act that specifies “this tree” does not refer to the singular tree that raw or naïve empiricism claims to know. In fact, what sense-certainty is really grasping is pure thisness, because without the accompanying demonstrative pronoun “this,” what was claimed to be a word (Hobbes's “name”) is really an empty sign (Hegel's “Name”), and absolutely indeterminate. What empiricism experiences, what the empirical mind receives through its senses are not significant words but individual signs, which, as I

explained above, are thoroughly natural, individual things, empty of any meaning. The assignment of meaning takes place only in the “this.” The crucial point is that “this” is meant to supply the missing meaning to the linguistic signs, which are pure, indeterminate data. Of course, “this” is also a linguistic sign but one that is meant to be meaningful. As such, as a meaningful sign, “this” is a word.

Above, I presented the idea that words, as meaningful signs, are essentially vanishing. This key feature is given full voice in the analysis whereby “this” is shown to be composed of “nowness” and “hereness,” where both “now” and “here” are demonstrated as being thoroughly transitory and vanishing. What is “now” is already past. The meaning of the word “now” is always spilling out beyond the sign that embodies it, leaving it behind. The same is true of “here” and consequently, true of “this.” Consequently, what Hegel is showing is the following: nominal empiricism claims to find meaning immediately in the singular things/signs of nature. But such things, to be meaningful, must become vanishing words.

The “vanishing” quality of words stands in stark contrast to the fixed, hard permanence of natural signs. Although, as I wrote above, pure signs may transform over time, their change is more in line with natural erosion, which, in Hegel’s book of nature, is so slow as to be virtually immobile. As Hegel writes in his youthful travel journal, mountains and their glaciers are boring. When, on his journeys, he discovers the faded traces and markings of earlier alpine surveyors, only then do the mountains become intellectually interesting. The faded markings of the past surveyors stand as *words* whereby the mountainous signs become meaningful.

The move from sign to word, when the former term is invested with meaning, happens through predication, through the action of judgment (*Urteil*), through the *Setzen* (positing) at the heart of the *Satz* (proposition/sentence). According to Hegel’s speculative (onto-grammatical) notion of the sentence, the subject posits itself in the predicate. This positing implies the investment of thought and meaning into the pre-existing, natural sign, whereby it becomes a word. The assignment of the demonstrative pronoun (indexical) “this” to the empty sign (e.g., “tree”) is meant to make the sensed tree meaningful. Indeed, it does but only for a very fleeting time (and place). In fact, the embodiment of the word “this” is so temporal and localized that it can be reduced to the pure generality of time and space in themselves, the indeterminate abstractions with which Hegel begins his *Philosophy of Nature*, in his *Encyclopedia*.

The pure indeterminacy of the word “this” means that it is synonymous with its own vanishing. As such, what we are left with is, once again, an empty linguistic sign “t-h-i-s,” whose meaning has spilled out of it. We thought we grasped something *there*, but it slipped through our fingers, leaving nothing but the memory of the failed experience. Of course, such a memory (*Erinnerung*) is itself not nothing; it is an experience that we have gained, a determinate negation (M79/W3, 73) that is *for us*, Hegelian *Phenomenologists*, looking back and recognizing ourselves in our own past experience. And yet, we have to ask ourselves, what is missing here, linguistically, in the experience of sense-certainty? Why is the only meaning that we derive tied to the very lack of meaning to be found in the actual words that we must use in order for us to grasp the meaning of our experience? The answer is

this: in sense-certainty, we witness a type of predication that really is not one at all, a judgment (*Urteil*) that is really not one, a positing (*Setzen*) that is neither a sentence nor a proposition. For what is missing, when I pronounce, for example, "This tree," is the copula, the verb "to be" that expresses the onto-grammatical reality of the act of "Urteil."

As we will see in the subsequent chapters of this book, the path of doubt (M78/W3, 72) that Hegel takes us on tells the story of the development of the copula, its enrichment whereby it comes to reflect both (self-)identity and difference. The lesson of Hegel's speculative sentence is that this enrichment only occurs when the predicate itself is acknowledged as a (vanishing) word whose meaning rebounds on the subject, that is, where the roles of subject and predicate are reversed, where the former opens itself to a meaning that surpasses it in its own vanishing. In the copula, the mediating meanings of vanishing words may be captured and realized but always ambiguously, in terms of the "two objects" that I referred to above (M86).

It is only when language attains the level of hermeneutical openness inherent in what Hegel calls speculative language that the subsequent communal and spiritual forms of the *Phenomenology* become ontologically possible. If you are willing to accompany me, our own journey will visit these ever-richer forms of the copula, where "to be" must also acknowledge and actively involve "what is not," where identity must include both itself and its Other.

As I said above, in stating no more than "this thing here and now," sense-certainty is devoid of the copula. It is subject and predicate in their naked immediacy. Sense-certainty is just as easily all predicate (Hobbes's materialism) or all subject (Descartes's rationalism). As all subject, the predicate disappears. The subject becomes its own predicate. As all predicate, the subject disappears. The predicate becomes its own subject. This state of affairs is absolutely erroneous because it is thoroughly unilateral or, as Hegel would say, abstract. Of course, as we will see in the last chapter, without giving away the ending, the fact that subject must also be predicate and the predicate, also subject, is, in itself, an expression of the absolute, speculative truth. However, the immediate, unmediated truth that we find in Sense-certainty is just that: certainty. Its truth must take place and develop in and through the mediating copula. That is the story of the *Phenomenology*, which, according to Hegel's epic narrative arc, can arrive nowhere else but at the certainty with which it began.

Since most commentators, particularly from the English-speaking world, are mainly interested in the Sense-certainty chapter for the theory of knowledge it presents or for its critique of naïve empiricism, the remarkable passage dealing with the ethical ramifications of the purely empirical relationship between knowing subject and known object is generally not lent much importance. For anyone interested in the ethical dimensions of the *Phenomenology*, however, the passage is of capital relevance; in it Hegel briefly applies sense-certainty consciousness to the practical sphere, to the sphere of raw desire (*Begierde*, M109/W3, 91), allowing us to see how this aspect is dependent on the corresponding form of knowing, on the conscious relationship of immediacy that naïve empiricism implies between

subject and object. The corresponding desirous relation between subject and object is instantiated linguistically (onto-grammatically) according to a specific rapport between subject and predicate or, put another way, in the configuration of the copula.

For Hegel, desiring is itself a form of knowing (as is any other thoughtful rapport with the object, e.g., through labor). There is no longer a break between the theoretical and practical realms, as found in Kant and, arguably, in Fichte. The immediate cognitive experience provided by sense-certainty is knowledge of natural, that is, immediate, objects as singular. In terms of desire, my relation to these objects is just as empty as the attempted theoretical knowledge of singular things. In fact, Hegel's point in this passage is that their status as natural objects means things (*Dinge*) are always in danger of being likewise construed as objects of desire; or, rather, my knowing relation to them, in their natural singularity, always collapses into the empty universal, which leaves me unsatisfied, a dissatisfaction that is just as easily theoretical as practical. Singular, natural, immediate objects of sense-certainty have no substance. They are simply there to be consumed, either through the theoretical understanding of empiricism or as objects of animal desire. In fact, they may accurately be thought of as consumer objects or commodities. They are nothing in themselves. My knowing relation to them, whether expressed as theoretical or practical, can therefore seek nothing other than their annihilation. To know them or to desire them is to apprehend the essential nothingness of their singularity.

Animals recognize this, remarks Hegel ironically. That is why they gobble up things (M109). In fact, the animal relation to sensuous things reveals true wisdom. Animals celebrate the true (theoretical and practical) nothingness of natural objects by consuming them. Indeed, if singular (natural) things really had any lasting objectivity, we would all die of hunger. However, this insight is only gleaned retrospectively, *for us*, Hegelian *Phenomenologists*, but, of course, not for the empirical animal itself.

Our immediate relation to natural things is itself natural and thus necessarily animal and purely sensuous. Such a relation is a "natural" feature of our existence. We must eat and feel. As we will see in the next chapter, the problem arises when we, through sophistry (for Hegel, the handmaiden of empiricism), actually take singular, natural things as real, substantial, and *individual*. The danger, for us, is to remain anchored or fixated at an animal level of consciousness. In such a relation, consciousness is just as empty as that which it knows/desires. The emptiness of such a form of objectivity reflects back on the subject that it is there for. My emptiness is the space of my hunger or desire, understood entirely as lack.

Nature is indeed this bacchanalian celebration of its own nothingness and emptiness. However, as I wrote above, this truth is only retrospective, according to the more complex forms or narrative worlds that we will encounter in subsequent forms of consciousness. Finally, the truth of nature's essential nothingness and the negating of this nothingness through human expressions of thought come about through what Hegel defines as Spirit (*Geist*). In the present context, Hegel refers (M109) to the Orphic Mysteries of Ceres and Bacchus, where, through the ritual

celebration by eating and drinking, we perform the truth of natural objectivity and our relation to it. However, we must keep in mind that the ritual celebration of these Eleusinian Mysteries, the fact that they represent human forms of artistic/religious celebration, already raises them out of the province of animal desire (*Begierde*) and into something in the order of a more spiritual drive (*Trieb*), more in line with the restlessness of thought, a conatus, the dissatisfaction that pushes Spirit through its higher forms of knowing. If, as Hegel writes, the Eleusinian Mysteries remain “secret,” it is because their true significance (the destruction of outer nature as essentially nothing and its recuperation in Spirit) takes place “behind the back” (M87/W3, 80) of the form of consciousness that we are dealing with. All it feels is dissatisfaction and hunger.

According to the onto-grammatical interpretation that I introduced above, the ethical dimensions of sense-certainty should be apparent in the immediate relation between subject and predicate, and the absence of any mediating copula between the two. This lack of any real relation implies a language-world of pure immediacy, where the subject, to the extent that it even exists beyond its essential emptiness, is indistinguishable from its sensuous experiences. These experiences, according to the model of naïve empiricism, are simply events of subjective consumption, where the subject's essential emptiness, or negativity, is immediately reflected into the nullity of the object. In other words, the absence of copulative relation between subject and predicate means that each is totally indeterminate, and their “relation” is that of a void facing a void. Saying that the subject does not really predicate itself through the copula (e.g., “this tree, here”) is tantamount to affirming that the object/predicate remains entirely devoid of any real selfhood. It thus remains a thing. Since this absence of relation forecloses on the possibility of the subject finding and recognizing itself in otherness, the subject is reflectively devoid of any objectivity. Hegel presents this nugatory aspect (M109) in terms of animal, natural hunger, where satisfaction can only be punctual and fleeting.

Above, I presented the fleeting, evanescent nature of the sense-certainty experience in terms of the vanishing words “here” and “now.” Recall that what the vanishing word leaves behind when outstripped by its meaning is, once again, the husk of the empty sign, devoid of meaning, and always multiplied to the (bad, natural) infinite of singularities. In other words, the truth of “here” and “now,” as vanishing words, implies that their true meaning always leaves them behind, giving once more rise to a world of empty, singular signs, which can be captured only by attaching the demonstrative “this,” which again breaks down into “here” and “now” ad infinitum. Thus, the repetitive punctuality of the sense-certainty experience implies a compulsive form of knowing and desiring that is “always forgetting ... and starting the movement again” (M109).

In the above-cited article on the Hobbesian ethical dimension of Hegel's Sense-certainty chapter, I develop the idea that its linguistic worldview can be applied to what used to be referred to, somewhat quaintly, as “consumer society.” I write “quaintly” because the shock and alarm attendant to the expression has now largely dissipated, replaced with a general submergence of its reality as the status quo. I wrote the article as a preliminary effort for what was to become the present book.

So, please allow me to reiterate some of the points that I have made before, while adding to them, in light of further reflection on the subject.

Like sense-certainty, consumer culture promises us an infinite variety of things, each presented for consumption according to its apparently unique singularity. Reciprocal individuality is also promised on the subjective side of the equation, since the consuming relationship that I am meant to experience through the singular desired thing is portrayed as strictly individual or personal. The consumer item or experience is always “for me.” Linguistically, as is the case in sense-certainty, consumer consciousness takes place in a world of proper names, whether this is understood in terms of branding (John, Peter, Apple, Samsung, Amazon, Google, Toyota, etc.) and its promise of unique product individuality or in the more general Hobbesian sense of proper names, where the singular truth of “this tree, this man” can be taken as referring to “this laptop,” “this cellphone,” “this car.” Of course, “this” singular commodity is always meant for me; it calls out to me or interpellates me in a deeply personal way. The thing that I consume already has, as we say, my (proper) name on it. The consumer, like the self of sense-data empiricism, is meant to experience his own individuality, his “mein-ess,” in his relation to the individual, singular thing desired.

If we apply Hegel’s analysis of sense-certainty to the dynamics of personal consumption, however, we see how the relation between the singular consumer and the singular commodity again breaks down into empty generality, leaving a universal “I” faced with the universal commodity. Whereas the act of consumption, of “experiencing,” always promises a privileged, unique relationship between me and the thing that I mean to consume as mine (*mein*), in fact, as a consumer, I am just as general or universal as the mass-produced commodity that offers itself up for me “exclusively.” Indeed, the consumed object is no longer the delightfully unique thing that was advertised but rather an empty iteration of “this, here, now” whose emptiness reflects back on me (“I”), the empty indexical consumer, in the form of renewed hunger and desire, leaving me constantly in a Hobbesian “survival” mode.

Indeed, the language of sense-certainty resonates throughout the discourses of consumer culture. For when Hegel invites us (M98/W3, 85) to spin on our heels and experience first “Here is the tree,” then “No tree is here but a house instead” and so on ad infinitum, we are enacting and embodying the consciousness of the consumer faced with a world that is no more than a never-ending series of new possibilities for consumption: now, this here car; now, this phone here; here, now this laptop, now this hamburger, now this vacation, and so on, all reducible to the universal and empty “this.” In fact, it may be argued that the omnipresent advertising qualifier “New!” is nothing more than the punctual reiteration and summation of “thisness”: “now, here, I.” In consumer culture, new things are presented to my consciousness in the newness of my singular experience, in an act of fleeting possession that gives rise to a renewed feeling of emptiness. Our examination of the language of sense-certainty tells us that such emptiness is the inevitable result of the fact that the things (*Dinge*) that we consume are nothing more than empty linguistic signs (*Namen*), fragments of the spectacle, as Guy Debord would say.

The objection may be raised that modern consumer society, as it is lived in affluent Western democracies, has little in common with the Hobbesian state of nature, with its idea of constant war of each against the other, nor with Hegel's portrayal of animal hunger in M109. People seem to get along quite well. The market is respected. Institutions function. Governments govern. Laws are passed and generally obeyed. Justice is served. However, it must be remembered that the natural state that both Hegel and Hobbes portray is one which has not yet developed any communal or societal institutions or even, within the logic of the *Phenomenology*, the basic structures of private property and intersubjective recognition. To compare consumerism with the ethics of sense-certainty or with Hobbes's state of nature thus means to assert the primitive aspect of consumer society, its pre-political, purely individualistic, selfish nature. As is the case with sense-certainty, consumer consciousness is never completely suppressed but is rather *aufgehoben* (overcome and yet *maintained*) within the richer, more developed ethical worlds that we in the Western world of late capitalism, for the most part, actually live in or at least aspire to. *For us*, the unsatisfactory nature of Sense-certainty will spur us on to visit richer language-worlds in our *Phenomenological* tour.

When I first re-read the *Phenomenology* with an ear to its hidden voices and vanishing words, I discovered the relation between the sensuous empiricism of the first chapter and the ethics of consumerism through Hegel's reference to the animal consumption of natural linguistic signs. If the goal of philosophy is to help us live better lives and if the history of philosophy is itself philosophy, then the history of philosophy should help us live better lives. Of course, this little syllogism has a hidden premise: that philosophy means "knowing thyself." The language-worlds that are presented throughout the *Phenomenology* should be seen in this way: discursive elements (in the elemental sense of earth, fire, water, and air) that determine specific aspects of our ethical reality, in which we may know ourselves. As well, to the extent that (the history of) philosophy allows us to recognize and reflect upon *present* discursive elements, through it we may be able to, following Hegel's dialectical logic, liberate ourselves from their pressing immediacy. And, for Hegel, the things that are closest to us are those which most hold us in sway.

Today, one such element is the pressing omnipresence of data. One only has to observe the dominance of "virtual" screen-fed reality in our lives and in the lives of those around us, in order to witness this. Further, it is indubitable that we ourselves, our behaviors, desires, interests, tastes, opinions, words, indeed, our very lives have been configured as data. When we look, click, like, and so on, we feed into a largely hidden global economy of "big data" that values us for our "eyeballs," that trades in our desires and our knowledge searches, and appreciates us simply as data-consuming data. If, as Marx said, money is the representation of work, and, as Guy Debord said, the spectacle is the representation of money, then we have now invented a further level representation: data, a representation of the spectacle (and of money and work). To the extent that Marx follows Hegel in the belief that work involves a real investment into objectivity, whereby self-

recognition therein becomes possible, we can add that work is a form of real predication, whose language-world is substantially different from that of data.

Reading Sense-certainty onto-grammatically helps us see how the brave new world of data is a world of empty linguistic signs always ripe for but essentially devoid of predication. In data as such there is no copula and no meaningful self-investment, no meaning. We are very far removed from Hegel's speculative sentence and its hermeneutical acknowledgment of otherness through the self-differentiating interplay between subject and predicate. Data is meaningless machine-language, to borrow another term, bringing about a world of pure representation and its exchange, divorced from any referent. The bits, the 0s and 1s that make up its language, are not traded, valued, streamed, and so on as meaningful words, and when words do surface, when we "tweet," blog, meme, and so on, our words immediately collapse back into the empty husks of signs/data. Our reading of Sense-certainty in terms of its onto-grammatical reality should help us understand the ethical dimension of our present data-world, to understand its close relation to consumerism, to subjective/objective emptiness, to its inherent meaninglessness, and to its kinship with the Hobbesian idea of a state of nature. Our own "state of data," Hegel teaches us, is not the apogee of human spirit but is, in fact, fundamentally primitive. Further still, given the stubborn recalcitrance that he ascribes to the ontological status of linguistic signs, a world thus constituted must present itself to us as a massive affirmation of an immovable status quo.

Our reading of Sense-certainty should consequently also leave us with the feeling that there is something missing, that there must be more to come, specifically richer expressions of the ambiguous relationship between the subject and the predicate as instantiated in the onto-grammatical copula. Within the economy of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, the speculative copula is the theater where the differentiating interplay of vanishing words and their meanings play themselves out, in real-world, communal, and societal performativity. Exploring this interplay and the communal possibilities of hermeneutical openness, within the economy of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, is what remains to be seen, or read.

Chapter 2

PERCEPTION: SIGNS AND SOPHISTRY

In Sense-certainty, we discovered an ethical dimension through Hegel's presentation of language, in that chapter, as an endless stream of linguistic signs, ready for consumption by the endlessly empty form of sensuous subjectivity. The language reality of naïve empiricism is one of materialist nominalism, and the communal structure of such a reality is akin to a Hobbesian state of nature. In the world of sense-certainty, we cannot even say that "What I see is what I get," because, ultimately, in this form of consciousness, I get nothing. As we saw, the language of this world can do no better than announce a series of singular experiences in terms of the empty vanishing words, "here" and "now." All sense-certainty can truly articulate is "now, this here," not only once but again and again. As we saw, the absence of the copula, in the onto-grammatical terms of Hegel's speculative sentence, bespeaks the absence of any differentiating interplay between subject and predicate, of any ambiguity (*Zweideutigkeit*) of meaning and therefore of the hermeneutical openness essential to the constitution of a variegated communal or societal body. The spilled meaning of "here" and "now" vanishes without a trace. The ethical reality of sense-certainty is one of singular, immediate, unfulfilled experience.

Sense-certainty consciousness believes that it "gets" a world of infinite variety and possibility but the experience of such a world is empty and unsatisfying. The names (*Namen*) that I assign to the things of the world, in an attempt to make them mine, reveal themselves to be empty signifiers, signifying nothing, like the 0s and 1s that form the diaphanous substance of the digital environment where we spend so much time, today. In fact, the "world" of sense-certainty, like the virtual world, is not really a world at all, at least not in the dialogically articulated sense that is normally associated with the term.

I would like to say that in Perception, we have learned from this past experience and that now we may simply move on to a higher onto-grammatical form, leaving sense-certainty behind. However, according to the narrative structure of Hegel's *Bildungsroman*, the forms of language that we discover in our progression are never really left behind. Indeed, we will see how the immediacy of the "here" and the "now" returns in later figures, in the sensuous realities experienced in Self-consciousness, in Reason, Spirit, Religion, and, finally, in Absolute Knowing. The same is true with the language forms that we will discover in Perception and

again in the third chapter, Force and Understanding. The reason is that the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology* deal with forms of consciousness. Since “consciousness,” as the relation between subject and object, and thus, between subject and predicate, is a constant theme and indeed the protagonist of the *Phenomenological* story, the different forms of language that we discover here, in the first three chapters, will reoccur throughout the book. Briefly, Sense-certainty presents an onto-grammatical relation that is devoid of copula. Perception presents a relation where the copula exists but through a unilateral form of predication. In Force and Understanding, we will witness the first articulations of speculative ambiguity, where the copula becomes the theater for contradictory, differentiating predication.

In linguistic terms, we might say that the *Phenomenology* recounts a series of failures, on the part of language, to actually denote the truth or, as Hegel puts it, again in the Introduction of his work, to attain the essence or the in-itself of things. Indeed, each form of consciousness (or knowing) is undermined by the words that it uses, insofar as the words themselves cannot capture the truth that they seek to articulate. Nonetheless, it is wrong to consider such “failures” in a purely negative light, as if we might one day come up with a language that is entirely adequate to our meanings. Indeed, if we did, that language would prove meaningless. Meaning always outstrips the words that express it and that is a happy feature of language itself. This is what their “vanishing” means: that meaning goes beyond the words that we use. So, while language in the *Phenomenology* presents a series of deceptions, each deception presents a hermeneutical opening beyond its own words. As we have seen, the words of sense-certainty, “here” and “now,” express nothing other than pure vanishing. However, such “lost” meaning *makes sense* in the framework of the greater, richer, more hermeneutically complex narrative structures that we will encounter in our *Phenomenological* journey.

Consequently, we can say that in Perception, in spite of its limitations, we have moved beyond the primitive element of names/signs to a more evolved and involved view of language, one that implies actual predication and, therefore, the involvement of a copula “to be.” The narrative move from the language of sense-certainty to that of perception is driven by the dissatisfaction, the emptiness that we experienced in the first form of knowing and saying. In Perception, consciousness now attempts to find satisfaction by nailing down the truth of the unsatisfying empirical experience, by filling the void of the vanishing “here” and “now” (i.e., the “this”) through the predication of properties, qualities, adjectives. We have moved from primitive pointing to and naming of things, to the language of judgment (*Urteil*) or predication. In other words, the things that were indicated as monolithic, undetermined signs are now subjectively predicated with properties, attributed to them by the onto-grammatical subject over the copula “to be.” We might understand this move anthropologically, as the progression from early childhood (naming and pointing) to knowing things through their properties, their quiddity or “whatness.” Or again, we might understand the move from naming to qualifying in terms borrowed from Hegel’s later *Principles of the Philosophy of*

Right (PR), where the will's utterance of possession, "This is mine," is replaced by the more substantial, societal category of property (PR sections 41–71).

Since the way we judge, know, and qualify reality is a reflection of ourselves, as language-using, knowing agents, we can also anticipate that, in Perception, as subjects, we will ourselves become more variegated, more qualified; we will move from simple possessors and namers of things to their proprietors. The relation between ourselves and the world will thus be more fixed and substantial, just as property is more fixed and substantial than the mere taking possession of things. Linguistically, therefore, finding properties in things is an action of investment, one that makes them "ours" in a deeper way than simply saying that they are "mine" (*meinen*) which we saw in Sense-certainty. In Perception, investing properties in things (signs) through predication is a way of inhabiting them, of making them into meaningful words and therefore, potentially, of recognizing myself in them.

As is the case with actual property, as Hegel presents it in the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*, such recognition of myself in my property ultimately involves letting it go, letting it pass onto someone else, through the written contract (PR, s.72). Here, in Perception, my recognition of myself in the thing possessed, as my property, will involve the knowledge that it is only "mine" for a time, that having things as my property involves the inevitability that they will pass on, and, ultimately, that I will "pass on" (in all senses of the word) as well. The very notion of "property," both as a determining qualifying of the things that I know through perception and in the "real" sense invoked in the *Philosophy of Right*, is evanescent. Property only makes sense to the extent that it is exchanged and "lost."

The sophistry that Hegel discusses in the final pages of the Perception chapter actually runs against the essentially evanescent quality of property and its words: in investing things with properties, through predicative language, I constantly try to hang onto them, and to hang on to myself, as I will explain further, below. The "insofar as" and "also" (M130/W3, 105) that are the key words of sophistry attempt to circumvent the essential vanishing of the words that Perception predicates, or, put another way, to short-circuit the inherent contradiction involved in predicating properties and which leads to their vanishing. The sophistry of perception appears as the magical incantation of language, whose iterations seek to ward off what I deeply know to be true: that what I perceive is as transitory as I am, and as are the words that I use to express both.

In Perception, we have an experience of universality but now, rather than appearing as an emptiness, in the experience of "here" and "now," the universal aspect presents itself as variegated, as particularized into a swarm of properties that appear on an indeterminate but substantial background. The object of perception is thus supposedly a universal substance that is assigned properties through predication. However, what is the substance without the properties? The universal part of the object appears as its underlying, unifying thinghood, as a kind of substratum or essence that underlies all the multitude of properties. However, this supposed substance is nothing without them, the same pure undetermined "being as nothingness" with which Hegel begins the *Logics*, and which reveals itself to be nothing other than empty thought itself.

As nothing but pure thought, the underlying substance upon which predicates or properties are bestowed is nothing but pure, undetermined meaning. As we will see, such pure meaning or thought is not really nothing. In fact, it is, as thought, pure subjectivity. The crucial lesson that we will take away from our examination of the language of Perception is that the *predicated* substance is also subject. As such, as subject, it is not passive but must posit or predicate itself into what was initially taken as the subject, bringing about the ambiguity of “two objects” and the speculative interplay in the copula that will come to constitute what Hegel refers to as the language of Science. However, Perception, as a form of knowing (consciousness), does not realize this truth. It does not comprehend that the particular properties that it predicates imply an underlying substance that is also subject. In other words, perceptive consciousness does not apprehend the contradiction between the notion of properties and the idea of substance. It is this contradiction that brings forth the true meaning of properties, and which sophistry stands against.

In Perception, Hegel shows that the predicated properties themselves are not as specific or particular as they claim to be, and that, as was the case in Sense-certainty, multiplicity is no guarantee of truth. The sophistry of perception, which, I believe, is a key element in understanding the linguistic nature of perceptive reality, is like the sophistry encountered by Socrates in Plato's *Meno*: rather than defining virtue in itself, *Meno* gives him a swarm of virtues. In perception, the desperate attempt to predicate properties is the fruitless quest to fulfill the empty substance through the never-ending addition of qualities.

The problem is that the predicated properties are determinations, manifold determinations where each one is the negation of something else. To use Hegel's example (M113/W3, 95), salt is white not dark, crystalline, not liquid, sharp, not dull, has a certain weight, and so on. The multiplicity of determinations of a thing is the multiplication of negations (M126), whose result is, once again, the pure universality of thought qua undetermined substance. However, taken (in its supposed “truth”) as an object of perception, it is something crystalline, for example, but not only that. It is only crystalline “in so far as” (M128) it is not a liquid. To *be* salt, it is also small, *not* big, tart, *not* sweet, white, *not* dark, and so on.

Furthermore, the properties of a perceived thing, its qualities or attributes, are, of course, themselves generalities or universals. “White” may qualify salt in its difference from pepper (i.e., white is not dark) but it is also a quality of whiteness shared with an infinite number of other objects, as is the case for “tart,” “crystalline,” and so on. Linguistically, we might say that the perceived thing is, initially, an indeterminate name or sign (e.g., “s-a-l-t”) that we determine through predication (e.g., “Salt is white”). However, the necessary multitude of predicates that perception calls upon us to add, in order to get to the truth of the thing and to fill the emptiness of its sensual “thisness,” always leaves us with the empty universality of its “substance.” The substantiality of the perceived thing is ultimately nothing more than the abstract, empty “also,” which, in fact, is nothing more than a reflection of my predicated *thought* in the object.

A fundamental problem that arises in the Perception chapter is one of identity and difference. In a judgment of perception, the subject itself is taken as self-identical, through a sentence or proposition that says something like, "I judge salt to be white" or "Salt is white." In predicating properties onto the object, however, the subject is positing *itself*, through its act of judgment that is already a self-removal or self-differencing, a movement from the subject to the predicate. The copula "to be" is the instantiation of this movement of self-differencing, making the subject *something*, giving it reality or "being," although, as I wrote above, here, in the judgment of perception, the predication is unilateral, flowing only in one direction, from the subject to the predicate. Nonetheless, in spite of this unilateral aspect, the judgments of Perception are inherently contradictory. The reason is this: judgments, *per se*, involve both identity and difference through the copula. This fact is not apparent to the judging subject of perception, however, who claims to assign predicates to a self-identical substance while remaining, itself, self-identical. Putting this in simple language terms: the words that the subject uses to predicate the object are both itself and not itself. In its act of predication, the subject's words escape and contradict its insular identity.

The contradiction of identity and difference, in judgment, is what produces the multiplicity of properties in the object. Judgment cannot do otherwise. The words that I use to qualify the object, through predication, are neither entirely *me* nor are they ever adequate to the essential, unitary substantiality of the object. We might say that the essential oneness of the subject is contradicted in the multiplicity of the predicates attached to the object. Reciprocally, the multiplicity of subjective predication contradicts the essential oneness of the object. On both sides, the One breaks down into a plethora of ones. In terms of the perceptual empiricism that Hegel is examining here, we necessarily move from a multiplication of properties in the *object*, a position that can be associated with Locke's empiricism, to a Humean/Kantian position where the *subject* breaks down into a multiplicity of principles of the imagination (Hume) or categories (Kant).

Consequently, the untruth of perception is alternately felt to be in the subject, who is thus "responsible" (M118/W3, 99) for the untruth, and then in the object, whose unicity is contradicted by the multiplicity of its "essential" properties. On the subjective side, if perception does not deliver the truth, then it is the perceiver's fault. The problem must lie in *my* inability to grasp the whole truth of the thing, its substantial oneness, perhaps stemming from my necessarily perspectival point of view, which reveals the arbitrariness that informs all perception. Or perhaps the problem lies in the limits of my perceiving mind, in the finite, *human* nature of my principles of the imagination or categories but also in their extreme generality. To grasp something in terms of the mental form of contiguity (cf. Hume) or of quality (cf. Kant) really says nothing about the thing in its individual specificity. Further, the multiplication of the principles or categories that characterize my knowing subjectivity ends up contradicting my own subjective identity, my own Oneness, as Hume himself admitted in his fruitless search to "know" the truth of personal identity.

On one hand, I am led to seek the truth of the perceived thing in its inherent properties, rather than through an analysis of my own cognitive structures. On the other hand, when things are thus perceived as having “properties by which they distinguish themselves from others” (M120), their own unitary identity collapses into a multiplicity that reflects back on me. The dilemma of perception is consequently that it must fluctuate between the two positions, between Hume/Kant and Locke. In fact, what is significant, what is really “for us” (M117/W3, 97) *Phenomenologists*, is the “cancelling” (M128/W3, 104) or the “overcoming” (M129—both terms are derived from *Aufheben*) inherent in the judgments of perception themselves, in the copulative contradiction between identity and difference. To put this in onto-grammatical terms, what is significant is the vanishing of the words that are iterated through judgment itself.

As we saw, the contradiction inherent in judgment (*Urteil*) not only affects the object but is also experienced on the subjective side of the perceiving consciousness. What the subject “ascribed” (M122/W3, 101) or predicated onto the thing, it also “makes itself” (*ibid.*), writes Hegel. The contradictions of perceptive consciousness are “reflected out of the object into itself” (M118). Thus, subject and object are “both a pure, many-less One” [and] an “also” that is dissolved into independent matters (i.e., predicates. *Ibid.*). Finally, what both subject and object are in danger of losing, in perception and its acts of predication, is self-identical oneness. This exclusive identity is meant to guarantee, for both subject and object/predicate, their lastingness, their permanence, guarding them against their “demise” (*Zugrundgehen*, M125/W3, 103). However, it is precisely in their demise, *qua* vanishing, that meaning arises.

In order to guard against such *essential* finitude, arising from the contradictory collapse and vanishing inherent in perceptual judgment itself, both the object and the perceiving subject must be endlessly endowed with multiple properties. This is the role of sophistry: to keep terminal contradiction at bay, that is, to maintain unity through “also” and “in so far.” In order to maintain self-identity against subversive, contradictory difference, sophistry utilizes the *faux* difference of multiplicity. Since meaning, as the essence or truth of a thing, arises only from its demise, and words only give up their meaning through their vanishing, sophistry forecloses on meaning, guarding it as the exclusive purview of the judging consciousness. Such nailed-down meaning is, in fact, meaningless. Consequently, through sophistry, rather than meaning, we get “disillusion” (*Täuschung*) or deception (M111/W3, 93). As we will witness throughout our further linguistic examination of the *Phenomenology*, meaning is essentially related to the ambiguity that is grounded in difference. In other words, meaning is essentially ambiguous. Sophistry, in Hegel’s book, does not engender ambiguity but rather seeks to remove it. It does so by denying the essential vanishing of words. Sophistry sets them in stone, as signs or, as Hegel sometimes puts it, as meaningless, empty “words” (M127/W3, 103).

The sophistry of perception seeks to save these moments [of identity and difference] from their contradiction... by distinguishing between the aspects, by sticking to the “Also” and the “in so far.” (M130/W3, 104)

Two comments: first, Hegel's insistence on sophistry in the final sections of Perception reinforces the linguistic reading that I am undertaking. Sophistry is linguistic or it is nothing. Second, sophistry is not something added onto perceptive consciousness. Rather, it is an essential feature of perception in its acts of judgment or predication and the attendant investment of things with properties. The sophistical predication of properties is meant to prevent the essential vanishing that we witnessed in Sense-certainty, through the words "here" and "now." Hegel writes,

Thus the singular being of sense does indeed vanish in the dialectical movement of immediate certainty and become universality, but only a sensuous universality. My "meaning" has vanished. [On the other hand] perception takes the object as it is in itself, or as a universal [substance, One] as such. (M130)

The sophistical element is not only a feature of perception but is a fundamental aspect of unilateral judgments generally, as we will see throughout our reading of the *Phenomenology*, wherever expressions of dogmatism occur. The idea is always the same: foreclose on difference and ambiguity, control meaning, and stunt the communal/societal reality of hermeneutical openness. In all of these cases, meaningful words are reduced to the status of unilaterally determinable signs.

Multiplicity plays a crucial role in sophistry's effort to forgo vanishing by making properties something real and ever-lasting. Properties are considered as possessions, accumulated and kept in an arbitrary way, neither absolutely defining nor contradicting the unique identity of the possessor. It is the sophistical "also" and "in so far" that allows the possessor to multiply "properties" as definitive of "his" underlying identity, without the multiplicity actually contradicting his essential oneness. Hegel's Perception chapter thus provides us with an ethical snapshot of the language-world that it evokes. It is again one in which we are invited to recognize features of our own world, one whose dominant epistemological model or form of consciousness is empirical. Our onto-grammatical reading of this world presents the relationship that arises in the copula between knowing subject and predicated object, as fundamentally individualistic.

Although the modern individual per se has not yet appeared on the *Phenomenological* scene, we can say that his point of view is already present in the subjective desire to define and maintain oneself through the (self-)assignment of properties. Further, the empirical form of consciousness, described onto-grammatically, cannot help but speak a language of unilateral predication that is sophistical (and dogmatic, as we will see) in its attempt to nail down and monopolize meaning. Further still, in its eschewal of ambiguity, difference and vanishing, the sophistical language of empiricism can do nothing but support the status quo, to maintain as they are both the objects predicated and the self that predicates them.

Fittingly, we can turn to Hume for a highly evocative portrayal of the modern, empirically perceptive individual in his sophistical quest for self-affirmation through the predication of individual properties:

His wine, if you'll believe him, has a finer flavour than any other; his cookery is more exquisite; his table more orderly; his servants more expert; the air, in which he lives, more healthful; the soil he cultivates more fertile; his fruits ripen earlier and to greater perfection: Such a thing is remarkable for its novelty; such another for its antiquity: This is the workmanship of a famous artist; that belong'd once to such a prince or great man: All objects, in a word, that are useful, beautiful or surprising, or are related to such, may, by means of property, give rise to this passion.¹

Through its necessary sophistry, the perceiving consciousness does not, and indeed must not, grasp the contradictory nature of self-identity as it necessarily arises whenever it pronounces itself in unilateral judgments. Likewise, it does not appreciate that such self-contradiction is a necessary condition for true meaningfulness, which is always dialogical and shared. On the contrary, his search for meaning is destined to failure through the endless accumulation of things and their properties. One thinks of Orwell's *Citizen Kane*, where, at the end of his solitary, individualistic life of accumulation, the protagonist, in an ultimate attempt at recapitulative meaning, can do nothing other than utter the proper name of his first possession, the perambulator "Rosebud," investing it with all the meaning of a life lived. Of course, "Rosebud" becomes, thus, a vanishing word, meaningful for us in all its terrible ambiguity.

The unilateral judgments of sophistry, in Perception and in other *Phenomenological* settings that we shall visit where the language of dogmatism is concerned, is the work of the understanding (*Verstand*), in Hegel as it is in Kant. In claiming to take things as they truly are, perception (*Wahr-nehmung*) carries with it the judgments that are generally associated with common sense and its language. When "sound common sense" comes into play (M131/W3, 105), it is as *gesunde Menschenverstand* (ibid., 131). Fittingly, it is the "common-sense" aspect of the understanding and its unambiguous employment of the judgment form that the speculative proposition opposes. As we saw in the Preface, it is the formal understanding that articulates "the general nature of the judgement or proposition, which involves the distinction of subject and predicate" (M61/W3, 59), a common view which is "destroyed by the speculative proposition" (ibid.).

Indeed, because speculative thought nonetheless expresses itself in subject-predicate propositions of judgements, it may lead one "to believe that the usual subject-predicate relation obtains, as well as the usual attitude towards knowing" (M63), characterized by the understanding. However, speculative thinking, Hegel repeats, "destroys" (ibid.) this "usual" common-sense way of knowing and saying things. Significantly, it does so by showing the inherent ambiguity of meaning:

We learn by experience that we meant something other than we meant to mean; and this correction of our meaning compels our knowing to go back to the proposition, and understand it in some other [i.e. uncommon] way. (ibid.)

In other words, the common sense of the understanding fails to recognize that its own judgments involve both what is and what is not, and that what appears before it, in its perceptions, is always also a disappearance. The sophistical tendency of the understanding is anti-truth in Hegel, not because it makes conflicting affirmations. Indeed, that is the very stuff of Hegelian dialectics. Sophistry is anti-truth, because it maintains the fixed, common-sense opposition between identity and difference, and, in doing so, jealously guards meaning for itself, refusing the ambiguity that characterizes Hegel's speculative proposition. The understanding wants to hold on to things, to believe in their permanence, as well as in its own.

Of course, the understanding and its "common" or "general" way of knowing are not to be excluded from Science (*Wissenschaft*), any more than we would want to exclude the propositional form itself. In fact, the understanding, its language, and its propositional judgements are essential to producing the actual knowledge that forms the content of Science, upon which it reflects (speculatively) in its systematic embrace of nature, law, history, art, religion, and so on. The understanding is crucially involved in perception and thus in empirical science, which Hegel certainly does not intend to dismiss. Rather, the aim is to show that, left on its own, empiricism is insufficient. The pretensions of empirical science, whether in its primitive Hobbesian form or its more sophisticated Humean/Lockean forms, are expressions of vanity and sophistry precisely because empiricism claims to be the ultimate form of knowing and judging. Whether it is embraced within the holistic system of Hegelian science, as the producer of content, or left on its own in its sophistical pretensions, as a faculty of *judgment*, the understanding is essentially linguistic, a fact often ignored in both Kant and Hegel studies.

Because, as I wrote above, Perception presents a fundamentally individualistic view of the consciousness, that is, of the relation between the self and its world, the onto-grammatical dimension that I have been exploring leads to existential observations, if we take "existential" as that which concerns individual human existence, in "my" essential finitude. We have seen how sophistry intervenes to save the finite existence of the judging subject and their predicated world from vanishing. The judgments of "sound common sense" maintain the fiction that I am a unique, lasting substance, buttressed through the multiplication of "my" properties, which are reflections of the properties of the things that are mine. I am who I am, in so far as I was born of my mother, raised by loving parents, went to a good school, made good friends, went hang-gliding in the Himalayas, also learned several languages, also fell in love with Y, and so on. Similarly, I have a house; I also have a job; I have children, values, and so on. The language of sophistical judgment states these things as mine and allows me to say "who I am." It lends to my own finite existence a kind of permanence and fixity within the universal flux of things.

Am I wrong in using language in this way? No. My everyday use of such language is not something that is "wrong" or erroneous that should be eliminated. It is a feature of our lives, a background upon which or against which a greater form of hermeneutical openness may come to light. The language use of common understanding can be likened to a rather boring musical scale that may be configured into something interesting and harmonious. Similarly, the language

of sophisticated judgment, in its stubborn resistance against vanishing, can be appreciated as the Kierkegaardian/Heideggerian “idle talk” or “chatter” that is a necessary background element of everyday language and life. Or perhaps the sophisticated judgments of the understanding are akin to the inevitability of Sartrean “bad faith,” as the constant foil against which our freedom must play.

Existentially, our perception of things, and the judgments that allow us to predicate them as “ours,” bespeak nothing less than our desire to keep living, to hold on to our existence, not to die, not to vanish. I can find no better articulation of this desire than in the following quote from Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Illyich*, where the doomed protagonist attempts to contradict the irrefutable syllogism of death through the futile predication of multiple properties onto the things that have furnished his existence. I apologize for the length of the quote, in defense of which I merely state that it is Tolstoy writing here, not Hegel!

Ivan Illyich saw that he was dying and he was in a constant state of despair. In the depth of his heart he knew he was dying, but not only was he unaccustomed to such an idea, he simply could not grasp it, could not grasp it at all. The syllogism he had learned ... “Caius is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal”—had always seemed to him correct as applied to Caius, but by no means to himself. That man Caius represented man in the abstract, and so the reasoning was perfectly sound; but he was not Caius, not an abstract man; he had always been a creature quite, quite distinct from all the others. He had been little Vanya with a mama and a papa, with Mitya and Volodya, with toys, a coachman, and a nurse, and later with Katenka... Had Caius ever known the smell of that little striped leather ball Vanya had loved so much? Had Caius ever kissed his mother's hand so dearly, and had the silk folds of her dress ever rustled so for him?²

Nonetheless, whether Ivan Illyich or Tolstoy likes it or not, the meaning of his existence *does* lie in the “syllogism,” if we take this term in its general Hegelian sense, as a holistic, organic narrative structure. In the context of the novella, for example, the meanings associated with the vanishing words of the author/protagonist become open to us and to a whole world of readers, for our interpretation.

The existential dimension should not obscure the fact that Hegel's idea of speculative language is not meant to be the common language of individual existence. It is the language of Science, of greater, more complex and more ambiguous narrative forms, forms which grasp the inherent limitations of the understanding and its unilateral pronouncements, by making them the content of speculative discourse. Consequently, the grammatical reality of speculative discourse, in its essential ambiguity and hermeneutical openness, does not exclude individuality but rather takes it as inherently finite and limited, while enfolding its many meanings into communal or societal forms. We will explore the dialogical nature of ambiguity in the next chapter, on Force and Understanding.

Chapter 3

FORCE AND UNDERSTANDING: THE AMBIGUITY OF THE COPULA

In Sense-certainty and then in Perception, we have witnessed the workings of the essential ambiguity of language, which both seeks to preserve our world, that is, ourselves and the objective reality that we live in, while undermining our world through the vanishing quality of words. In Sense-certainty, our naming of things, our attempts to indicate them in their singular, finite realities, overturns itself. The very language act of the indexical “this” by which we mean things dissolves both them and ourselves into the vanishing words of “here” and “now.” Our attempt to make things ours as objects of consumption is doomed to failure. Their essential finitude (and ours) affirms itself in the language of ephemeral possession.

In Perception, we attempt to anchor ourselves in the things that we perceive by investing them, through the language of predication or judgment (*Urteil*), with properties, while reinforcing our own ipseity by endowing ourselves with the subjective categories and principles appropriate to the apprehension of those objective determinations. We predicate “whiteness,” “crystalline,” “bitterness,” “softness,” and so on to the substantial grammatical substance that we perceive through our categories of quality, quantity, relation, and modality, in an attempt to establish and maintain its, and our own, essential unity. We likewise attempt to establish our predicates as truly ours (i.e., features of *our* categories), to prevent their (and our) inevitable slide into nothingness. However, once again, language subverts our intentions. The qualities and the categories that we assign in our attempts to hold onto things, to make them our property, dissolve those things into empty universality.

Predication itself, in its attempt to seize upon identity, always also expresses difference. Our attempt to multiply both subjective and objective properties in order to keep things “as they are” reveals itself to be sophistical, both in the Hegelian sense of nailing down the unilateral meaning of things and in the general sense where language does not say what it *means*. The language act of multiplying properties in order to make something what it is, while making it ours, causes it to escape our grasp. Things are never said to be what they are; they are in-finitely “also,” “insofar as” and “to the extent that...”

As with the nominative reality that we witnessed in Sense-certainty, the sophistical element of predication that we discovered in Perception will not

disappear with our passage from that chapter. The ambiguity of predication itself and the tendency to struggle against it will prove to be recurrent linguistic features throughout the *Phenomenology* and its colorful parade of figures and forms of consciousness. This is just another way of saying that *Phenomenological* logos takes place in the predicative structure of what might be understood as common language but comprehended speculatively, that is, in a way that recognizes the interplay of identity and difference within the performative copula.

The essentially ambiguous nature of language, the fact that it says both what is and what is not, that it seeks to preserve the finite but can only do so by rendering it in-finite, that is, by making it *not* what it is, is the outcome of the final section of the Consciousness chapter, the chapter where we find ourselves once again situated linguistically over against the things of the world: Force and Understanding. Beyond the myriad possibilities of reference to the sciences of nature in the chapter, which is certainly one of Hegel's most arcane and opaque texts, I read it, above all, as the dialectical and indeed dialogical outcome or truth of the contradictory dilemma raised in Perception. In Force and Understanding we witness the dissolution, the fluidification of the hard and fast distinctions of the preceding chapter, which ultimately can be understood as opposing identity and difference. In other words, the fixed, sophisticated contradictions that arose in Perception, in our attempts to predicate properties, will now be seen as arising in the form of judgment itself, as this form is authored by the understanding. Consequently, we must not only look at the Force and Understanding chapter as an elaboration on what Hegel means by *Verstand* but, further, as a commentary on how the understanding undermines itself through its own judging discourse.

In fact, as we saw, understanding is a fundamental feature of Perception, in its fixating categorizations and oppositions. In Force and Understanding, we witness how the latter subverts itself through its own language of "force." In other words still, the notion and language of force reveals the conceptual truth of the *Verstand*: how the supposed opposition between identity and difference, held in place through sophistry, is actually a complicit interplay, one that is expressed in the notion of force and the laws that articulate it. This interplay is the truth of the judgment form. It is, above all, the linguistic structure of judgment that allows us access into the dense considerations on natural science that we encounter in this chapter.

A true, speculative grasp of judgment means comprehending the mediating copula, the verb "to be" between the subject and the predicate, as expressing both identity and difference. This comprehension represents a move beyond the standard and I dare say, "Kantian" way of seeing (determinant) judgment, according to the logic of the *Verstand*, in its effort to set things down as either what they are or what they are not. In inviting us to see judgment as *both* expressive of what things are and what they are not, Hegel provides an opening, within the most essential structure of language itself, for hermeneutical otherness. Indeed, the essential ambiguity of predicative language, its *Zweideutigkeit* (ambiguity or "twin-meaningness") presupposes the possibility of dialogue, of dia-logos where opposing discourses take place within a framework of mutually recognized

meaning. This move anticipates the coming chapter on self-consciousness, where the possibility arises for a form of objectivity in which we may actually recognize ourselves as selves: other people.

In Force and Understanding, as we will see, judgment overturns itself, realizes its ambiguity, and opens itself to other judgments. However, before reaching this happy realization, the judgments of the understanding express a hard, legalistic (Kantian) form, literally laying down the law of exclusive identity, of either/or. Of course, when I lay down the law in judgment, I also establish myself as the judge, as holding the key to the truth of things. So, when judgment overturns itself through language, my unilateral, exclusive judging subjectivity opens onto the actuality of other judgments.

In the first two chapters of Consciousness, I have drawn the parallel between linguistic forms (naming, predicating) and the ethical forms that we find in the opening chapters of the *Philosophy of Right*: Possession (“This, mine!”) and then property (“My house is well-built”). Drawing further on this parallel, Force and Understanding can be seen to express the next ethical form found in the *Philosophy of Right*: the contract, where the truth of property is realized in its exchange, through the ambiguity (*Zwei-deutigkeit*) of contractual language. In the language of the contract, the truth of my proprietorship is found in the fact that I surrender my property through exchange, to a second subject. To own something is to be free to get rid of it through exchange. Similarly, the predicative copula of judgment (“to be”) can be seen as expressing not only what things are but what they are not. Just as the contract, in the ethical realm described in the *Philosophy of Right*, forms the basis for societal substance (*Sittlichkeit*), the essentially dialogical nature of judgment opens onto hermeneutical openness and the possibility of different, shared meanings with others.

Let us remember what we’re looking for in the *Phenomenology*: Truth. Not just any “truth” but absolute Truth, which is synonymous with the Absolute itself: the conjoining of Kant’s phenomenal and noumenal realms, bringing the “lost” in-itself into the sphere of knowing, where it is no longer simply the object of endless moral striving (Kant and Fichte). Thus, in the *Phenomenology*, truth takes the initial form of the in-itself or essence. The *Phenomenological* project is to show how such inner truth or essence *exists*, how the in-itself becomes for-itself and so, for-another and *for us*, that is, how the Truth, in order to be the Truth, must *be*. In the preceding chapters, we have seen how Hegel’s stated method (from the Introduction, M84-5/W3, 76–7) plays itself out: first, we, *Phenomenological* apprentices, search for essence (the in-itself, truth) in the object. Not finding it there, we then look in the subject (or the other way around) before finally realizing that both approaches are involved in any adequate iteration of the Truth. Thus, in each moment of consciousness or knowing, we come to realize that the essential in-itself must always involve our knowing of it, how it exists for us, otherwise it is nothing. In speculative language, the in-itself (essence) must be for us and hence reflected as the otherness of itself or, as Hegel puts it, “for-itself.” This action, whereby the in-itself (essence) becomes for-itself (existence) is the truth of what Hegel refers to as “force” (*Kraft*). The two main themes of the

Force and Understanding section are thus “essence/existence” and “self-identity/self-difference” and how they are reflected (known) as “force” according to the (Kantian) understanding. The concept of force and how we understand it must serve to elucidate and develop the themes of essence and identity.

As I explained above, in my brief summary of Sense-certainty and Perception, the themes of essence and identity (and existence and difference) are not merely *reflected* in language but lie at its very heart, in language's unending and, as we have seen, ambiguous project to name things and then identify them through predication. The question of essence and identity/difference is finally, in linguistic terms, one of meaning.

First, I want to look briefly at how Hegel understands “force.” I am aware of all the possible scientific references that commentators have discovered in Hegel's chapter: Leibniz, Herder, Schelling, von Haller, Newton, to name but a few. What the abundance of possible references shows is, above all, how the notion of force was, at the time when Hegel was writing the *Phenomenology*, and still ten years later, when he began his *Philosophy of Nature* in the *Encyclopedia*, a dominant scientific paradigm, meant to explain every feature of the physical and psychological universes. As a philosopher, Hegel can only view such heuristic dominance with suspicion, critically. To the extent that Hegel also sees his epoche as fundamentally riven by the static oppositions of *Verstand*, it is not surprising that the *ur*-reference to force (and understanding) should be Kant, who is, *not* coincidentally, also the philosopher of judgment.

Kant is implicitly referred to in M146 (W3, 117), in terms of “those who say that the inner being of things is unknowable,” and again, with reference to the *Verstand* in M148 (W3, 119), where “the understanding” can only grasp the inner truth as “the universal, still unfilled in-itself.” The reference to Kantian understanding in its relation to the notion of “force” is clearly developed in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science's Philosophy of Nature* (e.g., s. 319 Remark), where Hegel calls force a “category” that can be used or applied by the understanding. In fact, reading how “force” is treated in the *Philosophy of Nature*, together with its presentation in the Force and Understanding chapter, shows us two things: force *per se* should *not* be considered as constituting an elemental feature of nature or the way philosophy comprehends it (as opposed to the early Schelling, Newton, Leibniz, Herder et al.); second, force is a creature of the understanding. Hegel will use the inherent dynamism of this creature, a dynamism expressed in the form of laws, in order to undermine and overturn the hard, unilateral, exclusive fixity of its progenitor, the *Verstand*. In doing so, Hegel opens the door to speculative thinking and its language.

The first step is to show that force is not One but really two, that is, to show how it involves both expression (utterance) and solicitation (M137-8/W3, 111–12). To wit, that which force acts upon is an integral actor in the notion of force itself. Thus, whereas force presented itself immediately as a conceptual unity, in fact, “there are at the same time two forces present ... [force] has gone forth from its unity into a duality” (M138). Then, Hegel shows how the essential binarity of force inscribes it with the ambiguous interplay of self-difference, whereby it actually exists, and as such, vanishes.

We see that the concept of force becomes actual through its duplication into two forces... These two forces exist as independent essences; but their existence is a movement of each towards the other, such that their being is rather a pure positedness or a being that is posited by another, i.e. their being has really the significance of a sheer vanishing.

Of course, my point in all of this, as we will see, is to show how the “vanishing” of the two forces can be onto-grammatically understood in terms of predication, simply by substituting the reference to “positing” (*Gesetzsein*) with the predicative act of the proposition (*Satz*). “Vanishing” can consequently be seen as the true destiny of “force,” to the extent that it is shown to be a *word* whose meaning escapes it. Of course, for this to happen, “force” must lose its stubborn, talisman-like character qua linguistic sign, devoid of meaning and yet waved about in all branches of science (*Lebenskraft*, *Dichtungskraft*, *Einbildungskraft*, *Urteilkraft*, *Naturkraft*, etc.).

In the *Encyclopedia's Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel breaks down the unicity of “force” into a binary expression, in order to allow its ambiguous essence (i.e., meaning) to shine through. Thus, force is presented as arising out of “different densities,” for example, as arising from the encounter between internal differences within the crystal, perhaps recalling his paradigmatic use of “salt” and its properties in the Perception chapter of the *Phenomenology*. In the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel presents the colorful “shining forth” from within hard crystals, arising from the interplay between light and dark facets, as an outward expression of inner essence (meaning). Thus, in *Encyclopedia* s. 320, force, in the form of colorful light, is presented as the essential being-for-self and being-for-another of what was hitherto simply an inner-reflected, essential “in-itself.” The same movement is presented in Force and Understanding, where “the unity of being-for-self and being-for-another is *posited*” (my emphasis, M134). In s. 262 of the *Philosophy of Nature*, Kant is mentioned, with regard to his *Metaphysical Elements of Natural Science*, along with a reference to Hegel's own “Doctrine of Essence” in the *Science of Logic*. The second “in-house” reference reinforces the point that what is at stake in the notion of “force” is not the explanation of its natural ipseity but rather how the concept overturns itself and vanishes, thus bringing essence (meaning) to light.

In the *Philosophy of Nature's* Remark to s. 262, Hegel again refers to Kant, whose interpretation of gravitational attraction and repulsion as binary “fixed mutual opposites” is presented as the result of “reflective understanding.” The problem is that Kant presupposes matter as something that force acts upon. Contrarily, according to Hegel, the binary notions of attraction and repulsion should be seen as breaking down and rendering ambiguous the apparently unitary concepts of both gravitational force and matter. Consequently, the idea of force itself appears to Hegel as a feature of the Kantian reflective understanding and its hard and fast oppositions. The “category” of force, for Hegel, is thus a derivative and factice creature of the understanding, providing “explanations” (M154/W3, 125), through the positing (*Setzen*) of natural laws (*Gesetzen*), wherein “it is only its *own* necessity that is asserted by the understanding” (ibid.). Against this view, Hegel shows how

the notion of force actually involves the reflective interplay between opposites, thereby overcoming their fixed opposition.

Further, since force's expression is one of *essential* appearance (*Erscheinung*), through a shining forth for-itself and for-another (M134/W3, 109, M136/W3, 110), we can take its ambiguous vanishing as an expression of meaning. The truth of force (as binary, self-opposed, self-differencing) is "for-us" because it is meaningful, because in it we recognize the reflection of (our) reflective thought. Of course, in recognizing the truth of force as inner and outer reflection, and in recognizing that truth as speculative (as involving the identity of identity and difference) we must see our own reflective thought as no longer exclusive and unilateral. In other words, through the judgement form, as expressed in the paradigmatic notion of force, the understanding has subverted itself and shown its true speculative nature, where meaning goes beyond its own pronouncements. Taken speculatively, "the one-ness in the form of which [force] appeared... vanishes" (M137).

While the paradigm for the expression of essence, in the *Philosophy of Nature*, is the differentiated interplay between light and darkness, which produces the primal iteration of "force" in the form of colored light, the same dynamic will play itself out in other areas where force is evoked, for example in electricity (cf. M152/W3, 123), which Hegel understands as arising through the external encounter between two different metals, as a kind of friction productive of static electricity, and again in magnetism, with its opposition between positive and negative poles; in chemistry, we discover the speculative encounter between basic and acidic compounds; in gravitation, as we saw above, essential difference arises between attraction and repulsion. In all these cases, force appears as something substantial and unitary, as an occult power that acts *upon* objectivity, while at the same time, and conversely, acting from within objectivity itself. The truth is that, as an expression of essence coming into existence, force is a reflection of thought into otherness, and it is *as reflection* that force appears to operate both *on* the object and *from* the object. In the grammatical language that I have been using, the dynamic of force shows that predication runs in both directions: that the onto-grammatical subject predicates an object which, in its "counter-thrust" (*Gegenstoss*, M61/W3, 58), rebounds upon and predicates the initial subject, according to the logic presented in Hegel's speculative sentence (*ibid.*).

Following the reciprocity that Hegel's *Phenomenological* method implies between known object and knowing subject, it should already be evident that as a feature of the understanding, the "category" of force involves both an objective and a subjective element and that each side of the equation is significantly enriched and differentiated in relation to what we began with in Sense-certainty, where both object and subject were radically underdetermined. As the *knowing* faculty of judgment, the Kantian understanding is essentially instantiated in the complicit dichotomy between subject and predicate. If we want to see force as the essential phenomenon arising from the interplay between two opposing elements (e.g., positive-negative; attraction-repulsion; expressive-soliciting [M140/W3, 114]), and if we want to see this dynamic complicity for what it is, namely, the reflection of thought itself through otherness, then we must see that thought is

expressed in the logical form of judgment, that is, in the fundamental activity of the understanding. However, the speculative grasp of judgment takes place behind the back of the understanding itself.

Of course, while judgment is a form of logic, it is also and, above all, a form of language. Therefore, while *Urteil* initially appears as a purely subjective way of processing the known object in terms of force, Hegel invites us to see that object as a reflection of the subjective action that knows it, that is, force as a self-positing in which the knowing subject recognizes itself. Such recognition can happen only through a reevaluation of the copula, where, through the truth of force, the copula is taken as the actual theater of the dynamic positing and counter-positing of essence/meaning, generated through the interplay of identity and difference. In linguistic terms, therefore, in Force and Understanding, we move from judgment as a strictly subjective act of information processing and output, taking place in the phenomenal realm, to its speculative, Hegelian sense: force as the primal expression of the concept, the dynamic reconciliation of identity and difference, of thought and being, and, most importantly in the Kantian context, of the noumenal and the phenomenal realms of experience. Indeed, in the process that I have just described, for the in-itself to be truly essential, it must be for-itself and necessarily, phenomenally for-us. Hegel puts this all rather bluntly when he writes: "The truth of force remains therefore the thought of it" (M141/W3, 115). In other words, it is thought that determines the essence of force, whether that essence takes place in force's utterance or in "the opposite extreme," that is, when force appears as "driven back into itself" (M141).

Arising through the dynamic interplay between subjective utterance and predicative response, the notion of force stands in for the essential interplay between identity and difference within the copula of judgment itself, where "self-identicalness is [in fact] an inner difference" (M162/W3, 132). Through the speculative apprehension of force, things reveal themselves as both what they are and what they are not, a contradiction that expresses their finitude, whereby they go to ground (*zu Grund gehen*) and present *for us* their meaning. The speculative ambiguity inherent in the concept of force is given voice in the attendant notion of law.

The essential ambiguity of force, the fact that it appears as both essence and existence, as self-identical and self-differencing, the fact that it can be seen as both a solicitation and an expression or utterance (M136—8/W3, 109–13), betrays its true speculative nature. The ambiguity of force is further witnessed in the "second supersensible" or "inverted" world that Hegel presents in M157–60 (W3, 127–30). This aspect of Hegel's text may indeed seem puzzling. What exactly is the "second supersensible world"? The expression allows us to introduce Hegel's discussion of law, and my comprehension of it, re-iterated throughout our reading of the *Phenomenology*, as a stand-in for copulative ambiguity.

On one hand, the second supersensible world can be seen, rather disparagingly, as the world construed by "schoolmasterly cleverness," as Hegel puts it in the *Encyclopedia Logic* (EL s.140 add.). In this sense, it is the real world as interpreted through the lens of the understanding and expressed in its judgments, that is, the collective phenomena of theoretical explanation, where all sorts of laws are invoked

and brought to bear on reality. In this light, the understanding explains the world in terms of hidden “supersensible” laws and their forces, just as today we might explain the world in terms of economic, genetic, behavioral, psychological “laws,” all of which indeed seem to rely on “real moving forces” (ibid.). While such laws claim that the relevant inner forces are universal in their breadth and application, they are, in fact, particular, contingent, and can be, at will, multiplied to infinity.

In both Force and Understanding, and in the addition to EL, s. 140, Hegel refers to real ethical content in this inverted world of explanation: education (cf. M160/W3, 130), crime, punishment but also historiography. All these ethical theaters are presented as playing out the language of explanatory judgment, which is presented in the EL text as particularly reductive, leveling, arbitrary, and vain. The reason is that laws, as explanatory constructions that either overtly or surreptitiously rely on notions of force, are always ambiguous. The essential ambiguity (*Zweideutigkeit*) of law, which will reappear throughout our investigation, is already apparent in the topsy-turvy world of force. Indeed, it is just as easy to explain a phenomenon by legislating the *expressive* force as the cause, as it is to come up with a law that refers to the *soliciting* force as the agent. Does juridical law enunciate and define what is just and right, or does it determine what is criminal and wrong?

Despite Hegel's criticism of explanatory judgment, we notice that in Force and Understanding, a more positive aspect is also presented. Indeed, Hegel relies generally on the term *Erscheinung* (which I generally translate as “phenomenon,” as opposed to *Schein*, which I translate as “appearance”), a fact that indicates how, in the inverted world of explanation, we are no longer dealing with reality as a mere *Schein*, that is, the mere appearance or illusory reflection of the first “supersensible beyond,” an appearance behind which essence is hidden in the noumenal in-itself. The advance made in the *second* supersensible or inverted world is that, in spite of the arbitrariness of its laws and judgments, at least here we are dealing with a linguistic reality that is itself essential or meaningful, as *Erscheinungen* rather than *Scheinen*.

For language, the second supersensible world indicates the arrival on the scene of meaningful words, that is, of linguistic signs that are no longer empty markers of a signified, noumenal beyond. In the world of explanatory judgment, there is therefore the opening onto a shared language-world, where meaning outstrips the vanishing words of ambiguous predication, where “what I mean” is always open to the counter-thrust of what was not meant. The ambiguity that lies at the heart of the judgment form subverts, as we have seen, the understanding's own unilateral predications. Its produced meanings are equivocal, arbitrary, and always open to interpretation. To the extent that they are disputed, argued, and refuted, they are actually shared.

In Force and Understanding, we therefore once again find ourselves on the doorstep of language, a step that Hegel invites us to take in his references to the essentially linguistic elements of “judgment,” “understanding,” “explanation,” “predication” (M164/W3, 134) as well as the notion of (written) law itself. In fact, in later chapters and in other contexts, we will see how “law,” for Hegel, is a constant stand-in for copulative ambiguity. Indeed, the essential ambiguity of “force,” as authored by the understanding through its judgments and laws, takes

place in the speculatively grasped copula, where, as we saw in the Preface's passage on the speculative proposition (*Satz*), the copula is taken as "the floating center" (M61/W3, 59) or "harmony" between the proposition's positing of identity and the "counter-thrust" of difference, as played out between the grammatical subject and predicate.

The ethical advance made in the Force and Understanding chapter occurs in terms of language. The ambiguity of force and law helps us conceive a hermeneutical openness within language itself, and such openness is immediately ethical. Rather than simply claiming that things are as they are, we find that "we meant something other than what we meant to mean: and this correction of our meaning compels our knowing to go back to the proposition (*Satz*), and understand it in some other way" (M63/W3, 60). Such openness to meaning arises within language itself and its privileged form of judgment or rather within its speculative copula, whose linguistic performance of identity and difference grounds the ethical elements that we will discover in Self-consciousness, Reason, and in Spirit, and without which there would be no *Phenomenological* story to tell. Rather than seeing Force and Understanding as the failure of consciousness in its attempts to know the world as a natural objectivity that is still devoid of other people, and thus as presenting an absence that remains to be filled through the inter-subjective drama of the following chapter on Self-consciousness, we should see Force and Understanding as already containing the speculative resources necessary for the next step. These resources are principally linguistic.

Before moving on, I would like to summarize and clarify some of the central points that I have been making in my onto-grammatical reading of the *Phenomenology*. The time to do so is now because Force and Understanding closes out the section of Consciousness, while already anticipating the inter-subjective relations of the next section: Self-consciousness. My main thesis is how the speculative copula, as Hegel presents it in his Preface, opens onto the performative actuality of hermeneutical openness, an openness that takes on ethical and historical/political and, indeed, absolute dimensions as we move ahead through discussions of Reason, Spirit, Religion, and Absolute Knowing. Since Force and Understanding is the first instance where the copula *shows* itself to be speculative, it is important to comprehend how it can be so, in the Hegelian terms that I have been concentrating on: subject, predicate, copula, signs, and words. I will add to this list the terms "vanishing" (*Verschwinden* and so on, which appears twelve times in Force and Understanding) and "meaning" (which I take to be a linguistic appropriation of what Hegel refers to as "essence"). I realize that some of these points have been made before, for example, in the Preface to this book and I will surely revisit them in later chapters. Those who feel that they already understand what I am talking about may simply move on.

According to Hegel's theory of language (which I outline in detail in the first chapter of my book, *Real Words*), linguistic signs are naturally (contingently) formed, singular entities that are recalcitrant to change. They are rather like the glaciers that Hegel noted dismissively in his youthful *grand tour* of the Alps: static and uninteresting. Thought finds linguistic signs, which Hegel sometimes calls

“names,” “mere words” or “empty words,” as being always already *there*; thought invests itself into the immediate reality of signs in order to make them into words. According to the “onto-logic” of Hegel’s idea of judgment, this “investment” takes place through predication: the (psychical and grammatical) subject predicates itself into the sign, thereby forming a thought-ful or meaningful word. The word, however, is never entirely adequate to the meaning (or thought) that inhabits it, and this is because the word remains weighed down by the natural aspect of its status as sign, to which it is bound and which confers on it an essential finitude. The word can never entirely contain the meaning that it conveys. The word is always outstripped by its meaning. Consequently, the word is “vanishing” to the extent that its meaning surpasses it. Further, their vanishing is precisely why words are open to interpretation. They can never entirely say what they mean. Sophistry, as we discovered in the Perception chapter, attempts to foreclose on “vanishing,” to nail down meaning and thus to maintain words in their fixated status as arbitrary signs.

It is important to see that, in Hegelian onto-logic, the leftover meaning that surpasses or outstrips the predicated, vanishing word is nothing but pure thought, which is simply another way of saying that “meaning” is a form of subjectivity and predicative agency. This is how the predicate can be seen to rebound on the subject, according to Hegel’s speculative reading of the proposition. Briefly, the meaningful predicate, as a word, should be seen as speaking out, as predicating itself back into what was initially taken as the subject. The meaning of vanishing words has real, performative agency and the theater for their ambiguous (*Zwei-deutig*) performance is the copula.

In Force and Understanding, Hegel presents, through the notions of force and law, predicative action as flowing in these two opposed directions, that is, speculatively. The predicate is no longer simply the passive vessel of invested meaning. It is no longer a mere determinable sign. Rather, its status as a (vanishing) word allows it to be grasped as the subject of predication, where its meaning rebounds on what was initially taken as the subject, which is now taken as an object/predicate. Of course, this action implies that the subject is now considered as more than a sign but reciprocally as a vanishing word whose meaning outstrips it! How can such an apparent riot of escaped meaning be ... meaningful? What Hegel says about essence may, again, help us comprehend the idea of meaning that I am putting forward. Simply put, saying that meaning “escapes” is akin to affirming that essence must exist, and it does so, first and foremost as being “for-itself,” which is Hegel-speak for subjective agency. However, in existing as for-itself, essence is, as well, *for-another*, and finally, *for us*.

If the reciprocal predicative action that I just described reminds you of the dialectic of inter-subjectivity, as it is presented in the next section on Self-consciousness, this is not surprising. The reciprocal recognition that Hegel sketches out in that section has been onto-grammatically grounded in the speculative copula that we discover in Force and Understanding. The dialogical existence of ambiguous meaning, where “we mean something other than what we mean to mean” (M60), may now take place. We will see how such ambiguity is not simply a matter of misunderstanding (see the famous Master-Slave dialectic) but comes to configure communal, societal actualities of hermeneutical openness.

Chapter 4

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS: PREDICATED BODIES

Force and understanding opened up language to interpretive otherness, to the fact that stating things “as they are” always involves recognition of what they are not, an ambiguity that is not arbitrarily accorded but, rather, anchored in the predicative structure of language itself. Such ambiguity should be seen as an interpretive recognition of other listeners and speakers. To the extent that, in language, I express myself, such expression conversely recognizes other people and their capacity to interpret the meaning of my language. This certainty, discovered in our investigation into the form of judgment and the copula in the inverted world of Force and Understanding, is developed, deduced, or made “true” in this chapter, on Self-consciousness. Here, the objective Other has been so predicated with the essence (meaning) of selfhood (thought) that it actually becomes another self, and to be a self is to speak one’s mind.

Of course, as witnessed in the intrigues of the best novels, great stories often depend on misunderstandings, some of which are hopefully resolved, but only after a struggle, antagonism, and conflict, otherwise known as the plot. The same is true of the *Phenomenology*. Misunderstanding is not immediately resolved, like a pistol shot. Otherwise, the book would have been a mere pamphlet and there would be little to say about it. Self-consciousness presents the first engagement in the long struggle for mutual understanding between protagonists that are both identical and different. As is the case with the best novels, or at least with those that encourage us to read to the end, the plot is resolved only in a much later chapter.

I am attempting to interpret the *Phenomenology* as a story about language itself, as it forms different worlds and human ways of being in them. If we adopt a historical narrative and apply ethical forms of language to it, then the famous master-slave dialectic, which Hegel presents in Self-consciousness, should be seen as a struggle for liberation that takes place in linguistic terms. What does this mean? I want to put forward a reading in which liberation happens in the struggle to leave a subservient state of “being predicated as” to a form of self-predication or self-determination through judgment. In these terms, we may read the slave as initially a mere empty “sign” (*Zeichen*) entirely open to the master’s determinacy. As we will see, such determinacy subverts itself to the extent that it invests or predicates the slave with meaning and selfhood, making her something much more than a passive sign. In fact, her liberation involves becoming a meaningful word,

a subject who liberates herself through her own linguistic performativity: she will herself determine signs, through predication, as meaningful words. Briefly, as a judging, predicating subject, the slave liberates herself from the status of empty, determinable sign and raises herself to the status of word.

Of course, a word is meaningful only within a sentence, and a sentence itself is meaningful within a broader narrative, which, looked at retrospectively, confers significance back on what was both word and sign. It should therefore be apparent that the linguistic positions that take place in Self-consciousness have already been encountered, in the first chapters on Consciousness, first, in Sense-Certainty and then in Perception. Finally, the master-slave struggle itself can be viewed as reenacting or rather as personifying the onto-grammatical cross-currents that we discovered in the ambiguities of Force and Understanding.

It might be instructive to remind the (puzzled?) reader that the interpretation outlined above implies a reading of the judgment form (i.e., the propositional form of predication) that is both ontological and psychical, as I have been presenting it up to now, and which I argue in detail in my article on the "Ontological Nature of Judgment" (Reid, 2006). I hope it is sufficient, here, to reiterate that, within the system of Science, Hegel understands the grammatical form of judgment in a way that seems to conflate the grammatical and psychical meanings of "Subjekt." His inspiration for this move is derived principally from two sources: Fichte's foundational scientific principle (*Ich bin Ich*), which indeed assigns self-positing subjectivity (the psychical) to the grammatical form of predication. Such predicative positing (*Setzen*) takes place across the copula "*bin*." Hölderlin's ontological interpretation of Fichte's proposition, in the brief text *Urteil und Sein*, puts forward the idea that Fichte's "Not-I" is superfluous, because in judgment itself, taken as an "Ur-teil" (a fundamental sharing out), the *copula* becomes an expression of both identity and difference. These features are key to understanding the crucial "speculative sentence" section of the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, where we find that, in (speculative) philosophy, "the usual subject-predicate relation ... is destroyed" (M63/W3, 60). The fact that Hegel's examples, in the Preface, concern the Absolute "I" in its self-positing act of predication ("God is Being," M62) illustrates the ontological complicity between the grammatical and psychical aspects of subjectivity (cf. the ontological argument). I emphasize that this speculative grasp of the judgment form is clearly meant to take place within the holistic narrative of Science. Therefore, in applying the onto-grammatical logic of the speculative sentence (*Satz*) to forms of consciousness, I am indeed reading these human, all too human, forms retrospectively (retro-speculatively?), that is, within the holistic context of a work that ends (and begins?) with Absolute Knowing. In the context of Science, as Hegel writes in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, "the Absolute alone is true and the true alone is absolute" (M75/IW3, 70), in another example of a speculative proposition. Bringing the absolutely speculative proposition down to earth, to the ethical realm, the Self-consciousness chapter's master-slave dialectic allows us to grasp the onto-grammatical significance of the struggle for mutual recognition, a struggle where the human body initially presents itself as a linguistic sign.

The master–slave dialectic is the beginning of the struggle for mutual recognition, and its inscription into history, into time. There are many interpretations of this dialectical episode, as witnessed in Miller’s translation of the section as “Lordship and Bondage,” which thus seems to place the movement in the feudalism of the Middle Ages. Some contemporary American interpretations are distinctly non-historical. In my view, we can at least say that the dialectic is temporal, for the simple reason that *struggle* per se is something that unfolds and, consequently, must take place in time. Further, when the temporal is later *recounted*, in language, then it is de facto historiographical and thus historical.

Historical recounting involves a trajectory and the possibility of an ending, an outcome that is contained in the notion of “dialectic” itself. Such an eschatological criterion certainly applies to the master–slave dialectic, which tells the first chapter of a story of liberation, one that is only partially resolved at the end of the *Phenomenology*’s Chapter 6 (Spirit), in the Protestant community that is evoked at the end of the section on Morality, in the move from Catholic confession to a community of shared belief. This relatively happy ending to a 300-odd-page epic is summarily presented in the “elevator pitch” that Hegel offers us, from M178–84 (W3, 145–7), where we find the historical plot reduced to its bare bones, written from the scientific (synoptic) point of view of the author, a point of view that Hegel says is *für uns* (for us) (M184), *Phenomenologists* of spirit. Of course, Marxist-leaning interpretations, like that of Alexandre Kojève, see the *Phenomenology*’s narrative plot as a historical tale of struggle that is driven forward through the progressive rejection of spurious reconciliations. These dialectical/historical interpretations are easily squared with the “thoroughgoing skepticism” that Hegel presents in the Introduction (M78/W3, 72), along with the dangers of early, premature satisfaction (M80/W3, 74).

Before further exploring the linguistic dimension of the master–slave dialectic itself, it is necessary to look at the earlier paragraphs (M166 to M177/W3, 137–44) in the Self-consciousness chapter. This text may simply appear as a sort of introduction or undercard to the main event, the title match between master and slave, but these preceding paragraphs are essential to understanding the main bout. That is because they engage a third term into the combat between the dialectical antagonists, an element that we can refer to as “natural life.” This natural element, which is introduced through a discussion of human sexual desire, plays a key role in the unfolding of the dialectic and in our grasp of language within it.

As we saw in Chapter 1, “the natural” in Hegel invokes an infinite plethora of thoroughly insubstantial, determinable, consumable things. As we have also seen, the immediate things (*Dinge*) of natural life can be understood as empty linguistic signs. Hegel’s evocation of sexual desire allows us to also see how the human body, taken as a natural thing, can be presented in this way, that is, as a determinable, empty sign. Liberation will thus entail a self-liberation where the body comes to present itself as a meaningful word and no longer exclusively as an arbitrary, determinable sign.

In paragraphs M168–71 (W3, 139–41), Hegel deduces self-consciousness as a living organism, a life process that is organic: involving corporeal members

and a bodily whole. The progression, in these paragraphs, is later repeated in the *Encyclopedia's Philosophy of Nature*, where, following a presentation of light, heat, and other natural forces, life appears as a dynamic process. This move is anticipated near the end of the Force and Understanding chapter (M162/W3, 132), where the inner differentiation of identity becomes an "inward vibration," where the "relation to self that is a self-sundering" anticipates organic life as a self-differentiating unity, as it is re-introduced in Self-consciousness (M170-171).

As living process, embodied in a living organism, consciousness first seeks to find itself in another like itself, that is, qua a living organism. This process involves consciousness reflecting on itself as both self-identical and yet different, in and through the Other. In terms of the natural living process itself, the sexually differentiated human being can only aspire to the natural unity brought about in the "genus" (M172/W3, 142). This strictly biological outcome is unsatisfying.

Consciousness must find a way to satisfy itself *as consciousness*, that is, to find itself and fulfill itself in the other consciousness. In other words, consciousness seeks to be conscious of itself in another self or to attain *self-consciousness*. However, here, at this opening stage, the other consciousness is configured strictly as a natural thing, as a "life" and therefore, we surmise, as a living body. This immediate search to be at home in the other (*bei sich bei anders*) is what defines human sexual desire, for Hegel. The problem is that when "self-consciousness is [merely] desire" (M174/W3, 143), its satisfactions are only fleeting, since in sexual satisfaction, what is, in fact, experienced is the fact that "the object has its own independence" (*ibid.*). The result is the essentially *persistent* feature of desire (*Begierde*) generally, which we already witnessed in Sense-certainty, and which we will encounter again in the Reason chapter: desire's senseless, endless repetitiveness, its bad (natural) infinity. Consequently, consciousness's attempt to know itself in the other as a natural life-form, through sexual desire, fails. Desiring consciousness "produces the object again, and the desire as well" (M175). Such blind, cyclical repetition and immediacy are features of Hegel's idea of nature, in general, and the reality of genus and species, in particular.

The ephemeral fulfillment afforded by the satisfaction of sexual desire, of knowing myself in the carnal knowledge of the other, is what Hegel means by "Self-certainty," in the heading to M166 ("The Truth of Self-Certainty"). The "truth" of the certainty of being at home in the other only unfolds through the twists and turns of the *Phenomenological* plot, where the fleeting, immediate, futile, and natural certainty of being sexually satisfied will be at least partially fulfilled in the moral (Protestant) community, evoked at the end of Chapter 6, in the last chapter on Morality. The first twist of plot is the master-slave dialectic, where the certainties of life and sexual satisfaction are thrown into question, a question that is not immediately resolved.

In sexual desire, I attempt to liberate myself from my body by transcending it in the possession of the other's body and the resultant satisfaction. This fails; satisfaction is always fleeting, and desire recurs endlessly. The other's body and mine remain singular natural things. I must overcome the natural heteronomy of my body in another way, a way in which it does not disappear in the transient

moment of satisfaction, but, rather, where it is maintained and preserved as full of selfhood. What the desiring consciousness seeks, in the “life” of its sexual partner, is really the “soulful” body, one where my body and that of the other are no longer empty, determinable, immediate, natural signs but meaningful words. The master–slave dialectic demonstrates how such an outcome can be brought about, not through the immediate “possession” of the other, in sexual satisfaction, but rather through work and the habituation of one’s own body. This is actually what the master–slave dialectic brings about, in the form of the slave’s bodily experience of discipline and fear. Such habituation can be apprehended linguistically, as we will see.

My argument rests upon finding in Hegel the idea that the body is a “sign” and therefore open to linguistic interpretation. First, recall that pure linguistic signs (or *Namen*), as such, are naturally formed, immediate, arbitrary entities waiting to be predicated and made meaningful by subjective thought. In order to read the human body as a linguistic sign, it is helpful to refer to the *Encyclopedia’s Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, where, in s. 431, Hegel presents the idea that intersubjective, self-conscious freedom can be realized only after the body’s immediacy has been “negated” by and invested with thought, bringing about a mediated entity that is beyond the purchase of desire. As Hegel puts it there, I must “suppress this immediacy in myself and thus give existence to my freedom.” The action, which preserves the body but now as an agent of freedom and no longer as purely natural, is presented in linguistic terms:

But this immediacy is, at the same time, the bodiliness of the self-consciousness, in which it has, as in its sign and its instrument, its own self-feeling and its being for others as well as the relation that mediates it with others.¹

The same idea is found in M175 (W3, 143), near the end of the passage on sexual desire: Self-consciousness involves carrying out “this negation of itself in itself, for it is in itself the negative, and must be for the other what it is [viz. the negative or free].” Easier said than done! Negating the semiotic immediacy of my own body and investing it with freedom (selfhood) is thwarted when my body is immediately taken as an empty sign, ready for determination by another.

As we have seen, the investment of the pure linguistic sign with the “soul” of subjective thought takes place through the act of judgment, through predication, an act whose speculative ambiguity, as articulated in the interplay between identity and difference in the copula, is the arena where the master–slave struggle takes place. Their struggle should thus be seen as competing acts of predication, involving the oppositional encounter, where “winning” means overcoming one’s status as pure sign and taking on the predicative agency of the word. Here is how the struggle unfolds (M185/W3, 147 to M196/W3, 154), not from the elevated (scientific/systematic) point of view, “for us,” but rather from down in the trenches, from the position of the consciousnesses themselves, engaged in the struggle.

First, each consciousness is plunged into its own subjectivity. It has only itself as an object. It is certain of itself, but this self-certainty is not yet true. In other

words, it has not mediated itself through another consciousness. The other is simply an individual, a life form. "They are for one another like ordinary objects, independent shapes, individuals submerged in the being of life" (M186/W3, 147). This relation is, of course, reciprocal, and recounts again what we saw in the earlier paragraphs on sexual desire. Each consciousness is, for the other, an "ordinary object," a potential object of desire, and, thus, an empty, predicable sign.

However, consciousness, to be consciousness, must distinguish itself from that which confronts it, here, the immediacy of life in the form of the other consciousness. As essential negativity or pure restless selfhood, each seeks to negate what stands as objective to it. This is the meaning of the "trial by death" (M188/W3, 149) that Hegel evokes, the fact that each antagonist seeks the annulment (death) of the other, as an object, while at the same time presenting himself to the other as an object of annulment. In other words, each "stakes its own life" in seeking the "death" of the other.

What is truly at stake, here, is the relation that consciousness has to its own body. When I present myself to another consciousness, as an object, then I do so as a body/sign. Similarly, when I take the other as a natural, immediate object, I take him as a body/sign. In each case, what is not taken into account is the selfhood or meaning of the other or, to put it another way, the freedom of the other. This is precisely the dialectic that Sartre recounts in the Concrete Relations to Others chapter of his *Being and Nothingness*, where the struggle has no happy ending. But then, of course, Sartre is an existentialist, where happy endings are rare! For Sartre, negativity is the essence of freedom and desire, and thereby hangs the tale of unending and senseless failure. For Hegel, negativity is sense (meaning, essence) in itself. In the theater of Self-consciousness, negativity represents thought's refusal to be reduced to the status of an empty sign, one that is merely "common to existence as such" (M187/W3, 148).

In seeking to negate the other, I define him first and foremost as a body and I can only do so by presenting myself to him, as a body to be reciprocally annulled. What I am really seeking is to be both body and soul, an ensouled body or, in Hegelian terms, to attain self-consciousness, a consciousness where I can be both free and alive, where I can think myself as a living object that is also a subject. In other words, I want to be a free "person" (M187/W3, 148). As we know from the "spoiler alert" sections M178—M184 (W3, 145–7), this can happen only through a reciprocal recognition that is not achieved in the imbalance of the master–slave dialectic.

If, in the context of the master–slave struggle, we understand the body ontogrammatically, as a sign, then what I truly want in the dialectical confrontation with the "other" is to get beyond my status of empty determinable sign (body) and be taken as a meaningful word. The problem is that, in the confrontation, I see the other as a mere body, as an empty sign, and therefore as a predicate that is simply a positing of myself, that is, as something to be negated or determined according to *my* meaning. Such a position is deficient because it reduces the judgment to a proposition of empty self-identity, leaving no room for real difference. And

difference is the essence of reciprocal recognition: I must recognize the other as being like me (free) *in* their difference. We might therefore take the tortured expression of Hegel's speculative proposition as an articulation of the "trial by death" in the master-slave dialectic:

Thinking therefore loses its fixed objective terrain (*seinen festen gegenständlich Boden*) when, in the predicate, it is thrown back on to the subject and when, in the predicate, it does not return into itself but into the subject of the content. (M62/W3, 59)

In the master-slave dialectic's "life and death struggle," each antagonist seeks to maintain their fixed terrain, whereby the other is determined as a simple sign that is ripe for predication, that is, each seeks to annul the other as sign and fill it with the subjective content of its own self-identity. However, in doing so, each must present itself reciprocally as a determinable sign and thus "stake its life." The grammatical/psychical *Subjekt* of the judgment must also present itself as predicable, and yet, the reciprocal nature of the confrontation means that the predicate must be allowed its subjective "counter-thrust." Consequently, in positing itself through the predication of the other as sign/body, each individual self presents itself as open to reciprocal predication. Such risk is the essence of dialogue, which reposes on the recognition of hermeneutical difference, within the recognized, shared framework of a search for meaning.

In M188 (W3, 149) Hegel assures us that this "life and death struggle" must not actually result in the real death of either of the opponents. In that case, the survivor would be as dead as the object/body that is killed. Rather, the "death" is figurative because if one of the opponents actually died, there could be no subsequent reciprocal recognition. Onto-grammatically, we can say that the "death" of either (reciprocally determined) subject or predicate removes any possibility of either one attaining anything beyond the status of empty sign, anything like a meaningful word. On one hand, we would be left with subjects of pure self-reflective "meaning" (*Meinen*), without any possibility of linguistic expression. Such pure subjectivity, in Hegel, is identical to pure negativity. As such, it tends to consume itself in vain self-feeling.² On the other hand, we would have only the dead sign, devoid of meaning and open to unilateral, dogmatic predication. Consequently, the actual removal (i.e., death) of either antagonist would mean that there can be no speculative sentence, no difference within identity, no meaning, no "freedom for argument" (M62/W3, 59), and, thus, no philosophy, no Science. Such a fruitless outcome will haunt the more worldly, historical configurations that we will visit in Reason and Spirit. It anticipates Hegel's diagnosis of his own contemporary situation, defined in terms of a culture of *Verstand* (understanding): on one hand, subjective feeling; on the other, finite, meaningless signs, with each aspect underscored by the inert, paralyzing negativity of skepticism. Of course, as we may already anticipate, such a world of skepticism, feeling, and empty signs (*qua data*) is one in which we might readily recognize ourselves. After all, the meaning of the dialectical encounter's "fight to the death" is *für uns*.

If indeed, as Hegel writes, consciousness learns that life is just as essential to it as selfhood (M188), this realization is nonetheless “for us” *Phenomenologists* and it is “we” who see how linguistic signs are just as necessary to logos as our bodies are to the constitution of dia-logos. However, in both cases, our body/signs must be ensouled with meaning, and in order to be meaningful, we must acknowledge the predicative agency of the other body/sign that stands before us. I will return to this, below. For now, let us return to the combat.

Regarding our two antagonists, there is an initial victor and a vanquished. The vanquished is the consciousness who surrenders, who blinks first in the standoff where each contender risks his life. One consciousness, the story goes, chooses “simply to live,” or, put otherwise, to maintain his body’s submersion in the things of life. He is thus essentially dependent on the life that sustains him. Above all, he is tied to his body. As a thing among things, he is essentially “for another” (M189/W3, 150), a determinable sign among signs.

The other combatant is the independent consciousness, whose essential nature is to be “for-itself” (M189). He is not *dependent* simply because, in the stand-off with the other, he has not blinked. He has continued to risk his life. In Hegel’s text, risking one’s life has, again, a very specific meaning: cutting oneself off from the things of the world and, by doing so, attempting to not be dependent on them. Put differently, risking one’s life for the independent consciousness means refusing one’s bodiliness and becoming a pure negativity, pure selfhood, pure determinacy, pure freedom. In Hegelian terms, we might say that this antagonist is pure “death.” The first consciousness is the “slave (or bondsman)” ; the second is the “master (or lord,” *ibid.*).

It is important to see that the slave is *subjected* to the master not directly but rather because the master has shown himself to be independent of thinghood in general, whereas the slave, in his attachment to thinghood, has shown himself to be ... a thing. In other words still, because the slave is dependent on the world of things, he shows himself to be nothing other than a body, a thing among things, an empty sign among signs. Pure data, we might say.

In fact, the seeds of revolutionary reversal are already sown. As consciousness, the master cannot help but measure himself through otherness, and in this case, the otherness is the very world he has forgone, the world of thinghood, as inhabited by the slave’s immediate relation with worldly things as pure objects of desire and consumption. In Hegel-speak, the master “mediates himself” through the slave and his world, and thus derives his essence (we say, “meaning”) from them (M190/W3, 150). He derives his essential quiddity or “whatness” from being mediated through another consciousness who is submerged in “thinghood in general” (*ibid.*).

So, ultimately, the master shows himself to be submerged in the very world he sought to escape, the world of immediate things, as objects of life and desire. The master is simply a consumer of the things that the slave produces, and as a pure consumer of things, he is dependent upon them and, in Hegel’s sense, a slave. “[T]he object in which the master has achieved his mastery has in reality turned out to be something quite different from an independent consciousness

but a dependent one" (M192/W3, 152). What the master consumes is the thing as dependent. He thus shows himself to be, in truth, dependent. He shows himself to be essentially a body among bodies, a sign among signs, the very position that initially characterized the slave.

Obviously, the slave is also related to things. However, because his immediate consumption/destruction of them is deferred and mitigated by the fact that he is producing them for the master's consumption, his relation to them shows itself to be less immediate, natural, and dependent than we at first supposed. Through his work, the slave shows himself to have a measure of mediation and independence with regard to things. His relation to them is not one of immediate consumption.

Just as the objectivity that the slave is involved in is richer than that of the master, so is his relation to his own body. His body is no longer an object among objects but an instrument through which his selfhood acts upon the things of the world, which, in turn, are no longer the singular "nothings" of consumption, as they arose for us in Sense-certainty. We might say that the slave comes to possess his own body, thus reflecting the Ancient (Greco-Roman) notion of freedom that I believe is at issue here, and why I think "master-slave" is a more appropriate translation than "lordship and bondage," with its Medieval (Christian-world) connotations.

In M194 (W3, 152), Hegel looks at the reversal from the point of view of the slave, which we will read together, below. First, let us review the dialectic thus far, linguistically, by looking at the relations of bodily engagement semiotically, in terms of signs. To begin with, both antagonists are living in a shared language-world. It is the linguistic state of nature that we discovered in Sense-certainty, a strictly nominalist world of singular, natural signs that are immediately the things that they denote. As singular, natural things, however, they can only be experienced by me through the "this," which breaks down into the indexicals of "here" and "now." I thus live in a world that is immediately spectacular, in Guy Debord's sense of the word, if indeed we can qualify such an environment as a holistic "world." Now, this table, here; now this computer, here; now, this cell phone, here; now, this sandwich, here; and so on infinitum. In fact, such immediate things are no different from how we normally understand raw, unprocessed data in an information technology context. The singular things, taken solely as sense data, are linguistic signs, devoid of any inherent meaning beyond their "thisness," which, we recall, was Hegel's point in Sense-certainty: nominalism, which attempts to confine the essence of things to what they are named as, leaves us with nothing but the empty linguistic sign. "This tree," as we saw, is nothing more than the letters that make it up T-R-E-E. As Hegel showed through his linguistic analysis of the "here" and the "now," the singular "thisness" of things collapses into empty universality, into nothingness. Such a collapse, as we saw in Chapter 1, was understood "ethically" as a relation of pure desire, where the empty universality of the sign, as pure data, is predetermined as nothing, the very determination that is inherent, for Hegel, in desire as animal *Begierde*. In order for me to desire the consumption of something, I must already determine it as nothing. In the master-slave struggle, the "life" in

which the two consciousnesses find themselves submerged is such a world. In this world, the Other presents itself to me as just another singular thing, in fact a body, ripe for desire, or nothing. The Other consequently has the status of a mere linguistic sign, devoid of inherent meaning. He is raw data.

Indeed, in the *Encyclopedia's* version of the master-slave dialectic, in the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, Hegel refers explicitly to the semiotic tenor of the struggle. In the main section of s. 431, he writes:

The process is a battle. I cannot be aware of me as myself in another individual, so long as I see in that other an Other and an immediate existence: and I am consequently bent upon the suppression of this immediacy of his. But in like measure I cannot be recognized as immediate, except so far as I overcome the mere immediacy on my own part, and thus give existence to my freedom. But this immediacy is at the same time the bodiliness of self-consciousness, in which, as in its *sign* and tool, the latter has its own *sense of self*, and its being *for others*, and the means for entering into relation with them.

The *Phenomenology's* "trial by death," in which the two consciousnesses find themselves, means that each is nothing but an empty sign to the other, and as such is determined as pre-annulled.

I suspect that at this point some readers may be having doubts, thinking that linguistic signs are never "pure" or empty. My Hegelian point, though, is that when we understand "things" immediately, in terms of sense-data, this is what we get, not meaningful words but indeterminate, arbitrarily determinable, predicate-signs. We may inhabit richer, more communal, social, political, religious language-worlds where words, sentences, and arguments hold sway. But in those contexts, we have already moved beyond the linguistic state of nature where the "trial by death" takes place. In fact, the whole point of the Self-consciousness chapter is to get us beyond the spectacular language-world of data and desire. Of course, as is always the point in Hegel, we never totally leave these "moments" behind. The danger (M80) rests present in our penchant to remain fixed in them or to revert to them. They are always part of us.

However, we must move on. One of the conscious antagonists shows himself to be more willing to sacrifice his "life" than the other. As we saw above, this meant withdrawing from his bodiliness, acknowledging the nothingness of his body as an empty linguistic sign. He does so not because he has read the chapter on Sense-certainty, but rather because he wants to become what is left *behind* the sign: pure universality, pure selfhood, pure negativity, pure freedom, and "death," and, above all, pure meaning. Of course, in so doing, he is no longer dependent on his status of being a sign among signs and so, he no longer offers himself to the Other as a sign. His nothingness, as the empty universality behind the "thisness" of the sign, means he not only refuses all heteronomous determinacy but he, himself, becomes pure determining agency. Grammatically, he becomes the pure subject of predication. He is the master. The other, the slave, as remaining pure sign in a world of signs, can only be predicated. He is an object/body/sign ripe for predication.

We can see how this dynamic is present in our contemporary world. First, it is apparent how dominating groups take *subjected* groups as bodies/signs. For example, women tend to be “as-signed” to their bodies and thus left open to heteronomous (heterosexual?) determination. The same dynamic can be found in other instances of domination, for example, when certain racialized groups are “as-signed” to fields of sports, entertainment, or folkloric determinations. Further, when dominated “slave” groups attempt to escape heteronomous determination and show selfhood (aka negativity, freedom, criticism), as in the American football players “taking the knee” to protest police violence, they are condemned by the dominating class. When women likewise refuse the exclusive role of determinable body/signs, and take on roles that manifest critical selfhood, they tend to either become “invisible” or hysterical, criminal, or the demeaned objects of Internet trolling. On an even greater scale, one might see the current machinations of “big data,” for example, Amazon, Google, and Facebook, to reduce “consumers” to data-streams, valued only in terms of their eyes fixated on screens, as a form of domination in line with Hegel’s master–slave dialectic: where the “slave” (i.e., us) is reduced to the status of empty sign, living in a world of signs.

Ripe for predication, the slave, as empty body/sign, can be called “names” (*Namen*) at will. This is because, for Hegel, signs per se, that is, in their emptiness, are inherently meaningless and therefore arbitrary. It is first and foremost the master who gets to profit from such arbitrariness. When the slave attempts to name *themselves* (and I use the pronoun purposively), then the new “name” is often dismissed or called “political correctness.” The same is true of predication. The master gets to say *what* the slave is, to determine her properties. As we saw, this is because the master has “risked his life,” which means he has taken onto himself the mantle of pure grammatical and psychical subjectivity.³

Hegel’s dialectic helps us see how the master’s status is unstable and how the seeds of reversal are already sown in the master’s one-sided, unilateral predication. In fact, we have already witnessed the critique or the “truth” of such predication. Indeed, in the Perception chapter, unilateral judgment attempted to take possession of the object, assigning properties to it through predication. This attempt failed, in that the specific properties showed themselves to be universal, stretching infinitely beyond the object itself. The reflected attempt to anchor properties in the thinking subject also failed; once again the specific principles or categories of the understanding collapsed into empty universality, like Hume’s principles of “contiguity” and “resemblance.” The failure of the master as the exclusive subject of predication replays the failure of Perception. His predicating of the slave, whereby the latter is meant to be possessed as “properties” (e.g., “slaves are lazy,” “slaves are stupid,” “slaves are emotional,” “slaves are maternal,” “slaves are athletic”), fails because of the inherent emptiness that has been unilaterally assigned to the predicate/slave/body, as pure, empty sign. Just as, in Perception, we saw that it is sophistry that prevents, at least temporarily, the whole structure from being overturned, similarly, the unilateral predication undertaken by the master is inherently unstable, inherently dialectical, simply because, as *judgment*, it relies on the copula. The “inverted world” of Force and Understanding presented

the ambiguous truth of the copula and prefigured the reversal that takes place, dialectically, in the master–slave encounter.

The master must show himself to be in fact or in “truth,” as Hegel would say, living in the world that he claimed to eschew through his heroic readiness to face death. In our onto-grammatical terms, this means that while he claims to act as the pure subject of predication or judgment, in fact, he is living in the very immediacy that he sought to avoid: the world of body/signs that the *slave* was initially immersed in. This is indeed the outcome of unilateral judgment: the collapse of properties into empty universality leaves, once again, a world entirely constituted by arbitrary, meaningless linguistic signs or names, something akin to Lucky’s speech in *Waiting for Godot*, which he articulates at the behest of his master, Pozzo.

We might likewise say that the master’s dominance has come to rely entirely on name-calling or negative branding. Put still another way, the master has reduced the slave to the status of data and that is precisely the “virtual” world in which the master finds himself living. His possession is thus reduced to the pure consumption of individual “names” or data, just as we saw in Sense-certainty. As in a Hobbesian state of nature, the master’s status, as such, is far from assured. He is just as much subject to or dependent upon the ruthless “right of nature” as is the slave. After showing how the master’s position is dialectically unstable and doomed to fail, Hegel then turns to the slave, to show how the reversal is experienced from their point of view (M194—96/W3, 152–4). Let us do the same.

The truth of the slave will show itself to be what initially stood against her as independent consciousness but in such a way where “independence” takes on a deeper meaning than the master seemed to understand it (i.e., being disengaged from the things/signs/bodies of the world in a way that bespoke pure subjective determinacy). We can say that the master’s independence was entirely negative; it consisted in being “free from.” The slave discovers a deeper, more existential freedom, one that resonates to the very core of her being and defines who she is in her self-conscious certainty. Of course, the certain knowledge of herself as free will have to be tested historically, made true through the trials leading to the end of the Spirit chapter (6), where freedom takes the form of reciprocal recognition, in the (Protestant) community of shared belief.

There are two essential ingredients to the slave’s liberation: fear of death and the discipline of service. The former aspect, the fear of death, represents the inner experience of pure subjective negativity. Consequently, the fear of death is not just some vague apprehension but rather the experience of “pure negativity,” “the absolute Lord,” “dread” that seizes consciousness and “shakes it to its foundation” (M194/W3, 152). It is a “pure universal moment,” “absolute negativity” and as such is “the essential nature of self-consciousness,” “pure being for-itself.” It is thus, for Hegel, pure thought or free determinacy. In onto-grammatical terms, the fear of death can therefore be understood as pure essence and therefore as pure meaning.

Just as we can comprehend the slave’s fear as having been inspired or instilled in her by the master, we can read it as the experience of pure meaning, the very meaningfulness that has been predicated into her sign/body by the subjective

determinacy of the master. Speculatively, the fear of death allows us to understand how the meaning invested in the slave/predicate now rebounds ambiguously on the master as the performative counter-thrust of difference. By instilling fear in the slave/body/sign, the master has created a monster!

The second essential ingredient for existential freedom is discipline qua work. Through work, the slave does not just experience her essential freedom as inner and universal; rather, work is the exteriorization of that freedom into objectivity. In the object that she works upon, the slave recognizes the reality of her own freedom. Work also allows the slave to overcome the natural immediacy in which she was submerged. "Through his service, he rids himself of his attachment to natural existence... and gets rid of it by working on it" (M194).

Hence, the worker/slave is able to recognize himself in the worked upon object, in the same way that the artist can, in Hegelian terms, be said to recognize herself (i.e., her creative freedom) in the finished work of art. Whereas the object of desire and consumption (the empty sign/data) could only provide a "feeling of self" and a "satisfaction" that is only "fleeting," work "holds desire in check" and produces a form of freedom that is "something permanent" (M195/W3, 153), wherein, most importantly, the slave can recognize the substantial nature of their own freedom.

The fundamental "object" that the slave works upon, in order to accomplish any work at all, is their own body/sign. This happens through the discipline of habituation, a process whereby the slave comes to predicate her body, investing it, through practice, with the soul of selfhood, in order to make it a meaningful, active word. To support this idea, I will once again turn to the *Encyclopedia's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, specifically in the Anthropology chapter (sections 410 and 411), in the transition from "Habituation" to the "Actual Soul." In the main text of the latter section, Hegel writes:

The soul, when its corporeity has been molded and made thoroughly its own, finds itself there a *single* subject; and the corporeity is an externality which stands as a *predicate*, in being related to which, it is related to itself. This externality, in other words, represents not itself, but the soul, of which it is the *sign*. In this identity of interior and exterior, the latter subject to the former, the soul is *actual*: in its corporeity it has its free shape, in which it *feels itself* and makes *itself felt*, and which as the soul's work of art has human pathognomic and physiognomic expression.

The above-quoted passage clearly relates the body to the soul in grammatical/psychical terms, as a sign that is predicated by the subject, which, in the "Anthropology" chapter of *Subjective Spirit*, is the still inchoate "soul." It is significant that Hegel describes the holistic result ("the single subject" or the "actual [*wirklich*] soul") as a "work of art," significant because a work of fine art is, as we will later see in the Religion chapter, a *singular* expression of freedom qua spirit; that is, it is a singular, somewhat natural thing (sign) predicated with subjective freedom or negativity, creating something beautiful and, above all, a meaningful word.

Teaching Hegel, I have used an artistic example in order to show students how Hegel conceives of the relation between the body and the soul/self, and between nature and spirit, more generally. I use the example of the trained dancer, who initially, in her apprenticeship, experiences her body as a foreign, rather inert and recalcitrant object, stubbornly resisting her attempts to make it follow the prescribed *pas*. Through training, also known as “habituation” and work, her body becomes invested with her will (subjectivity, negativity, freedom), so that finally, when she dances, there is no longer any soul–body separation. Her body is an actual expression of her freedom, made real in an artistic (singular) form.

When we find art beautiful, this is what we see. We can say that the body is liberated, that freedom is given form or that freedom is embodied in the expression of the dance. In the above quotation from the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, Hegel clearly articulates this ontological reality in grammatical terms: the body, as a “sign,” is a “predicate” for subjective (in both senses of the word) judgment. Hegel actually employs such an artistic example in *Encyclopedia* s. 410, where, through habituation,

an aptitude shows the corporeity rendered completely pervious, made into an instrument, so that when the conception (e.g. a series of musical notes) is in me, then without resistance and with ease, the body gives them correct utterance.

Anyone who has struggled to learn a musical instrument knows what he is talking about.

This is how I am presenting the slave's liberation, in such a way that his “fear of death” can be understood as the existential experience of pure freedom qua meaning, and thus as undiluted subjective determinacy, and where “discipline” and “service” can be understood as habituation. These two aspects can therefore be comprehended as carrying out the self-liberation described above, where the slave is no longer an empty body/sign, heteronomously determinable, but rather as a self-determined, meaningful word. Such a positive reading of “habituation,” as a form of actual liberation, is presented, again in *Encyclopedia* s. 410. Whereas habit is often “referred to disparagingly,” in fact,

habit is indispensable for the *existence* of all intellectual life in the individual, enabling the subject to be a concrete immediacy, an ‘ideality’ of soul—enabling the matter of consciousness, religious, moral, etc., to be his as *this* self, *this* soul, and no other, and be neither a mere latent possibility, nor a transient emotion or idea, nor an abstract inwardness, cut off from action and reality, but part and parcel of his being.

In the context of the master–slave dialectic, the slave's liberation has taken place through the habituating work that the master has imposed upon him, first, in predicating his own body/sign through the habitual, even “proletariat,” self-disciplinary aspect of the work itself, which is necessarily repetitive since it must feed the never-ending appetite/desire of the master for singular things of

consumption. It is interesting that Marx finds in factory discipline a key aspect for proletarian liberation: the creation of a formidably disciplined “army” of workers!

Onto-grammatically, we can comprehend such work itself as an act of predication, carried out on the body and other signs, making them into words in which the worker may recognize herself (as free), as an ensouled body or meaningful word that speaks out.

Beyond or besides the rather narrow Marxist interpretation, we see how the slave’s self-predication represents a performative challenge to the master’s name-calling. And indeed, we understand how, today, as I mentioned above, the first step in any liberational struggle involves the critical refusal to allow the group that one identifies with to be *named* by the dominating culture, and to correspondingly name oneself through an act of self-determination. Of course, as I also mentioned above, the dominant culture often resists such challenges by referring to a unilateral determination of “history” or “tradition.” Similarly, the dominant culture often objects to the critical questioning or predicating of other established signs and symbols (statues, flags, celebrated historical figures, etc.) on the part of the “slave.” Significantly, the dominant culture’s greatest wrath is in reaction to the “slave” who dares to then turn its predicative powers against its former “masters” (“cis-gendered,” “colonizing,” “racializing,” etc.). Hegel’s master–slave dialectic, understood linguistically, helps us appreciate the real performative stakes involved in such name-calling.

In the master–slave dialectic, we have seen how the slave, as a mere predicate/sign, is consigned to the status of bodiliness. In overcoming this status and raising herself to the status of grammatical/psychical subject, the slave is no longer a “mere” body/sign. As a meaningful word, she is, in terms borrowed from the *Encyclopedia’s Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, an actual soul. Looked at in the framework initiated above, it is easy to see how contemporary forms of slavery (e.g., forms of human trafficking) rely entirely on predicating enslaved persons exclusively as *bodies* and thus, again through the unilateral predication we discovered in Perception, as property. Liberation involves leaving behind this exclusive, heteronomous determination, becoming an “actual soul” as the foundation for personhood.

For us, we can say that through her act of self-predication, the slave has shown herself to be not only a *subjected* sign or predicate but a subject, the one who signifies, the grammatical/psychical subject of judgment. In so doing, the slave has enacted the ambiguous reality of the copula, the speculative truth that it does not just express the unilateral self-identity of the master but that it must also represent a force of resistance, the linguistically performative counter-thrust of difference, an enactment of ambiguity (*Doppelsinnige*, M180/W3, 146) that acknowledges interpretive openness. The “slave” is no longer as-signed as such, anchored and fixed in her nominal reality. No longer a mere sign, ripe for heteronomous predication, the slave has become a vanishing word, whose meaning is revealed by the fact that she no longer is what she is but, rather, is what she has been.

Of course, the happy ending that involves a community of shared meaning and reciprocal recognition, “the I that is we and the we that is I,” as Hegel puts it in M177 (W3, 144), a sentence that, significantly, alternates the grammatical subject and

predicate (“we” and “I”) in a way that illustrates their speculative reciprocity, is not yet realized. There are other opportunities for grammatical misadventure. Indeed, we left the master submerged in an impoverished world of data/signs, a world of his own making, and hardly one open to the dialogue of reciprocal recognition that Hegel promised “for us.” Put differently, the master is a sign among signs, not yet a vanishing word. In terms of the reciprocal recognition demanded of self-consciousness, this condition remains a challenge for the freshly liberated slave.

Stoicism

Where are we? This is always a key question in understanding the *Phenomenology*, generally. Visiting the forms of consciousness therein, along with their attendant forms of discourse, it is easy to expect too much from each outcome, from each progression on the narratively predetermined, teleological “path” that Hegel presents. It is more difficult to conceive of this path as one of doubt, despair, and thoroughgoing skepticism as expressed in the Introduction to the work (M78/W3, 72). In order to see “where we are” in the story that Hegel tells, we must locate ourselves retrospectively, in the context of greater forms of sense in which prior movements participate.⁴ In this light, we must not forget that “Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness” occur within the chapter on Self-consciousness and therefore contribute to what Hegel wants to say about it.

There is a historical dimension to the chapter on Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness, through clear references to Hellenistic, Roman, and early Christian times. One might wonder how these historical references are related to either a psychology or an epistemology of self-consciousness. My answer is the following: Hegel is presenting us with the genesis and structure of *modern* self-consciousness, one which we can generally see as ours, as contemporary readers of the book. Indeed, if, on a fundamental level, we take the *Phenomenology* as a book responding to the most essential philosophical injunction, *gnothi seauton* (Know thyself!), which I take to be the case, then such knowing involves showing who we are as self-conscious moderns. The idea may be obscured by the fact that, for Hegel, modernity did not begin with the invention of the Internet, nor with that of selfhood (attributable to Descartes), but rather with the Christian era and the attendant form of consciousness that Hegel calls “unhappy.” In other words, to be a modern self-conscious person is to be “unhappy,” to be inwardly torn between the twin poles of what we might refer to as “immanence and transcendence,” “body and soul,” “natural determination and essential freedom,” and so on. If we take the project of “our” modern/contemporary self-knowledge as what Hegel is referring to in Self-consciousness, then we better understand what Stoicism and Skepticism are really about: two incomplete and unilateral (“abstract,” in Hegel’s vocabulary) figures whose unresolved contradiction is the stuff of the modern condition as essentially unhappy. I am not claiming that Hegel is an existentialist, simply that the modern, individual protagonist of the *Phenomenological* story, as self-conscious, has this feature of unhappiness. How can we understand this feature linguistically?

Before I approach the onto-grammatical dimension, I want to highlight the fundamental Hegelian structure at work in the Stoicism, Skepticism, and Unhappy Consciousness section ("Freedom of Self-consciousness" M197/W3, 155). I believe this structure is present, in various expressions, throughout the oeuvre and can essentially be attributed to a form typical of what Hegel considers to be articulated in the Kantian *Verstand* (understanding): the unreconciled opposition between the judgment-directed, empirically determined categories and the pure subjectivity of the temporal form of intuition. I have written elsewhere, in an article/chapter on Hegel and Reinhold (in di Giovanni, 2010), about how Hegel sees this unreconciled opposition as the critical challenge for speculative thought, a contemporary challenge that is not merely theoretical but ethical and even political. In fact, Hegel sees his own time as in a dangerous state of diremption, where the separation between categorical reflection and the well or pit of pure subjective innerness (negativity, freedom) has given rise to what he describes in his Preface to H. F. W. Hinrichs's *Religion in Its Inner Relation to Science* (1821) as the "three universal presuppositions" of the time: (1) the skeptical belief that knowledge of the Truth (aka the Absolute) is impossible; (2) that man can only "know" finite things; (3) that feeling arises as the only form of absolute knowing (W11, 56). It is this third aspect that Hegel finds particularly pernicious, and personified in his Berlin rival, Schleiermacher, and his followers. The contemporary culture of feeling has led, in Hegel's view, to expressions of sentimental nationalism and even terrorism, as exemplified by the assassination of the Russian diplomat Kotzebue by the theology student Sand. I believe that we can understand the relation between Stoicism, Skepticism, and (the feeling of) unhappy consciousness through this prism, even though the chapter was written in 1806, a decade or so before the above-mentioned assassination and Hegel's call to Berlin. The need of the time, as Hegel had already expressed it in his *Differenzschrift* (1802), was to reconcile the contradictory aspects of Kantian *Verstand*, which Hegel sees as unfortunately instantiated in his contemporary world.

Philosophically, Hegel (and perhaps Schelling) could understand the demand for reconciliation in terms of three dominant intellectual currents of the time: Spinozism; Kantian criticism, and the renewed Skepticism (G. E. Schultze's *Aenesidemus*) that seemed to flow from it, along with Jacobi's promotion of faith and Schleiermacher's promotion of intuition or feeling, in his *Discourses on Religion*. Indeed, it is Jacobi's claim, in his Pantheism quarrel correspondence with Mendelssohn, that provides the key to understanding what Hegel means by Stoicism and how such a philosophical tradition, "in which nothing speculative is to be encountered" (W19, 255), can be pertinent within the *Phenomenological* narrative. Jacobi's claim that all dogmatic metaphysical thought, when carried out fully, ends in atheistic, deterministic, fatalistic Spinozism is adopted by Hegel as a critique of dogmatism generally. And this is what the section of Stoicism is: a critique of philosophical dogmatism and its language.

So what is dogmatism for Hegel? Inspired by Kant's view, dogmatism is foremost any form of pre-Critical metaphysical thought, that is, any thought that claims to employ the indicative mode of judgment (propositions) in order to make truth

statements on the essential nature of being (reality, objectivity, substance, existence, etc.). For Hegel, such judgments are dogmatic because they declaim on objectivity in a way that is entirely disengaged, as if the *knowing* or cognition of the object were not implicated in the knowledge that I have of it. However, paradoxically, this also means that my knowing of such a detached, foreign object leaves it entirely out the equation, as something disengaged from my cognition of it. As it is, in itself, the object remains beyond my apprehension. Therefore, in claiming to think and judge “it,” I am really only thinking and judging myself. As Hegel writes, “In [dogmatic] thinking, I am free, because I am not in an other but remain simply and solely in communion with myself, and the object, which for me is the essential being, is in undivided unity with my being for-myself” (M197/W3, 155).

Arguably, the whole point of the *Phenomenology* is to show how the object is always the object *of* a knowing subject, and how subjective knowing is always knowledge *of* the something known. Or, in linguistic terms, the predicate is always the predicate *of* a subject, and a subject, to be such, must be the subject *of* a predicate. This realization is speculative, involving the interplay of identity and difference within the copula. Dogmatism does not allow this. It makes judgments without recognizing the essentially differentiating nature of the copula. In fact, dogmatism takes the copula as a neutral instrument or lens through which the subject attempts to understand its object as something disengaged, completely removed, a relation that Hegel criticizes convincingly in the Introduction (M74-79/W3, 69–74). In taking the object/predicate as disengaged, as a neutral thing that can be “known” without acknowledging “my” role in that knowledge, the subject is, in fact, merely reflecting itself in the predicate/object. Onto-grammatically, the object/predicate remains an empty, determinable sign.

Dogmatism, as naïve metaphysical thought, is common to rationalist currents such as Spinozism, Cartesianism, Leibnizianism, Wolffianism, Mendelssohn, as well as to all empiricisms and materialisms, which, for Hegel, are just as naively metaphysical as their rationalist rivals. What all these seemingly distinct and sometimes apparently opposed currents have in common is their dogmatic judgments on the nature of reality. As such, even the most stringent materialism becomes “metaphysical” and dogmatic. This explains the plethora of purported references that commentators have discovered in the Stoicism section. These references are generally true in that they are all examples of dogmatism: taking reality as the neutral object/predicate/sign of “my” judgments.

Nonetheless, perhaps the most pertinent dogmatic reference, for Hegel's take on Stoicism, remains Spinoza. The reference is faithful to Jacobi's assertion that all metaphysics are reducible to Spinozism, but only on condition that we add Jacobi himself to the mix because, on Hegel's view, Jacobi's brand of faith-based empiricism remains thoroughly dogmatic and thus itself reducible to the Spinozistic metaphysics of immanence! In order to understand the point being made here, we have to acknowledge how, for Hegel, the judgments of dogmatism are themselves a form of immanence because they do away with the speculative nature of the copula, a nature whereby the copula becomes an expression of identity and difference.

In dogmatic predication (judgment), as I wrote above, the copula becomes an empty medium through which the knowing subject simply reflects the universality of his own thought into the object. Dogmatic judgments are thus reduced to the simple, vain reflection of $I = I$, where my judgments do nothing but posit my own thought, in the form of universal principles (*Prizipien*) (*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, W19, 250, where the chapter title is “Dogmatism and Skepticism”), which I predicate into the reality that I make statements on. There is ultimately no distance between subject and predicate, where “the true is the agreement between thinking and reality or rather the identity of the concept as subjective with the objective” (*ibid.*). We can just as easily affirm that “all is subject” as “all is substance.” This is what the platitudes of Stoicism’s pronouncements can ultimately be reduced to. They are boring, tautological, and devoid of any real, particular, that is, differentiated, content.

The True and the Good, wisdom and virtue, the general terms beyond which Stoicism cannot get, are therefore in a general way no doubt uplifting, but since they cannot in fact produce any expansion of the content, they soon become tedious. (M200/W3, 158)

In claiming to hold himself at a distance from the reality that he declaims on, the dogmatic Stoic ironically shows himself to be either completely immersed in the reality that he posits or completely removed from it. In fact, he is both but without any true mediation between himself and the objectivity that he judges. Above, I used the term “vain” to describe the use of the Fichtean formula ($I = I$), in order to describe the self-reflection involved in the language of dogmatism. In my book *The Anti-Romantic*, I show how the notion of vanity (*Eitelkeit*) is applied by Hegel to the ironical judgments of Friedrich Schlegel, and how in such pronouncements the romantic ironist is accused of making critical statements on a reality that he himself has posited through his unilateral acts of predication. The “ $I = I$ ” expresses not only the “vanity” of dogmatic self-regard but also the emptiness of such judgments. I am not saying here that Schlegel was a Stoic or that Stoics were Romantic ironists. I am simply remarking on the commonality of their dogmatic, non-speculative use of the judgment form in their pronouncements. The empty self-reflectiveness of such judgments, their vanity or lack of mediating “content” (M200/W3, 158), is an indirect reference to the copula, the space where content will be scientifically developed, wherein the copula, full-filled, becomes the particular moment of the Hegelian syllogism (W6, 351). Such particularity can develop only through a copula understood as an expression of both identity and difference. Again, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel says,

The agreement must be superior (to that of the Stoics). It is in the other-than-the-self, in content, in the determination, that the agreement with oneself must take place. (*Werke* 19, p. 273)

I think we can take “agreement,” here, as a synonym for the copula.

The anachronistic reference to the dogmatic judgments of the Romantic ironist also brings to light the theoretical import of "hypocrisy" (which Hegel associates with Fr. Schlegel and Schleiermacher, in the *Philosophy of Right* ss. 140, 164). Hypocrisy, like sophistry, is an unfortunate feature of the understanding (there *are* fortunate ones!) and will reappear in later figures of dogmatic language that fall principally under the sign of the *Verstand*.

Hegel presents hypocrisy as a kind of bad faith, a self-delusion enabling the dogmatic consciousness to go on declaiming, judging, producing words of wisdom without realizing that the reality that he thus "knows" is only a reflection of himself. The immediate acknowledgment of this state of affairs, through the collapse of hypocrisy, brings forth skepticism, which is truly "nothingness" or nothing more than the essential nothingness expressed in the pure freedom of empty self-reflection as I = I. Skepticism is the unmediated "truth" of Stoicism, just as, in the context of Hegel's critique of Early Romanticism, Novalis, in his nostalgic self-consumption and death, is the *truth* of Schlegelian irony, minus the hypocrisy.

The blatantly solipsistic aspect of Stoic dogmatism will, in Hegel's later lectures on the history of philosophy, take the associated dogmatic form of Epicureanism, where "The common goal [with Stoicism]" is the "inner freedom of the subject in itself: ataraxia, renouncement, imperturbability, equanimity, to attach oneself to nothing and to suffer nothing" (W20, 254), a position easily understood as a profound skepticism bordering on nihilism.

In linguistic terms, dogmatic judgments are riven with such hypocrisy, which, once removed, leaves them inherently self-annulling and liable to skeptical collapse. Thus, when the Stoic claims that "there is no freedom," his statement actually contradicts itself, in that the enunciation itself is meant as an act of *free* self-positing. When he states that "everything is determined," he is really stating, "I am free to judge it so." Indeed, when the Stoic claims, "I am free," he is really positing his linguistic determinacy, where his predicated freedom becomes an actual determination. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, hypocrisy keeps the Stoic from seeing this contradiction and thereby from seeing his position collapse into a modern (Christian-era) form of nihilistic Skepticism, which is pure subjectivity, and, thus, "the vanity of consciousness" (W19, 360). Similarly, in the *Phenomenology*, the skepticism that Hegel deals with is of the strictly modern (C-E) variety, as are the forms of dogmatic Stoicism and the Unhappy Consciousness.

Of course, Skepticism itself must remain mute. For when it expresses itself dogmatically, in saying, for example, "Nothing is," then the real self-positing predication of its own judgment involves it in a performative contradiction. Such a contradiction is more than a philosophical device with which we may catch the skeptic out and, thereby, reaffirm the truth of logos. Indeed, the performative contradiction that we witness in skepticism's dogmatic pronouncements is a feature of judgment (and logos) itself, whose words take place in the space between being and nothingness, between the finitude of its linguistic signs and the infinity of pure meaning (essence, thought). The truth of dogmatism's performative contradiction is that words, as predicated signs, are real, finite, and vanishing. Consequently, they necessarily "contradict" themselves. They both are and are not. Hegel's idea

of speculative language ensures that such vanishing and finitude do not annul philosophical logos but rather constitute it by recognizing the self-contradictory vanishing of words as the very condition for meaningfulness, expressed through the copula of judgement. By comprehending the speculative truth of dogmatism's always contradictory judgments, Hegel invites us to read the predicative copula as invested with the ambiguity of both identity and difference, opening dogmatic reality to the hermeneutical openness involved in dialogue.

As is always the case in Hegel, and so I allow myself to repeat, greater structures of sense retroactively confer meaning on their constituents. Here, we see how the evanescent, finite, self-dissolving nature of dogmatic judgment is a necessary feature of speculative language itself, how dialogue involves dialectical self-negating. Thus, the overcoming of fixed positions, the removal of hypocrisy, and the recognition that one's dogmatic pronouncements are inherently self-contradictory should not be taken as factors that bespeak a collapse into nihilistic silence or the meaningless babble of sophistical bad faith. Rather, these features are made meaningful by the (Hegelian) fact that the dialogical reality of self-consciousness is already presupposed by figures of Reason and Spirit that are yet to be explored. Nonetheless, these "later" figures are already *there* in the *Phenomenological* narrative that we are following. Even if they are under constant threat (M80/W3, 74) by fixated expressions of dogmatic *Verstand*, such as the ones that we encounter in Stoicism and Skepticism, dialogical reality is guaranteed by the subsequent figures of the *Phenomenology*, figures that are there for us to discover and in which we may still (hopefully) recognize ourselves.

The reference to freedom in the section's title (Freedom and Self-consciousness: Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness) helps us see how we got to the current chapter from the master-slave dialectic. First, we must acknowledge that the Stoic is neither one nor the other but both, "whether on the throne or in chains" (M199/W3, 157), whether Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus. Then perhaps we can see that the freedom gained by the slave, in their ability to self-predicate, to form a meaningful word, does not guarantee the communal, reciprocally recognized, and thus more "concrete" nature of that freedom which Hegel has in mind. The slave may have progressed from the status of body/sign to that of a word, whose vanishing bespeaks their own predicative agency. Indeed, the slave may well be now his own master but, as a Stoic, his sentence or proposition is not yet speculative. Put another way, the Stoic's newfound ability to predicate herself is dogmatic. As a Stoic, "I am free because I am not in an Other but remain simply and solely in communion with myself" (M197/W3, 155).

Thus, historically, as a manifestation of spirit, Stoicism could only appear at a time of "universal fear and bondage" (M199/W3, 157). As a philosophy, Stoicism "is thus suitable to the spirit of the Roman world" (W19, 252), where we find "a formed system of rights-law" (W19, 253). The final truth of the Stoic and his world is one of indifference (*Gleichgültigkeit*, *ibid.*, 254–5). The culture of ancient Rome is one where the type of juridical, individual, personal freedom offered to "citizens" still falls short of the type of inner and inwardly conflicted freedom that Hegel associates with the Christian, modern condition of unhappy individuality,

and is even further distinguished from the community of shared belief that such modern freedom will later form, as articulated in the “I that is we and the we that is I” (M177/W3, 145).

Skepticism, as an expression of inner freedom (nothingness, fear of death), anticipates the move to early Christian (unhappy) consciousness, to the extent that it is already the true outcome of the dogmatic immanence that we are discovering in Stoicism, which, in its dogmatic pronouncements, is really just the self-positing predication of pure contentless thought, that is, Skepticism. According to Hegel's historical account, Christianity (Unhappy Consciousness) could only rise in the Roman world, where the dogmatic indifference of Stoicism can do nothing better than collapse into the empty negativity of Skepticism.

The feature of indifference, in the last sentence, is an important element that we will revisit later, when we address the languages of Greek tragedy and Roman comedy, in the Spirit chapter. For now, I simply want to point out how the dogmatic immanence that arises from the deflation of the speculative copula into the neutral medium through which the grammatical/psychical subject predicates nothing other than itself tends to produce a world of unilateral (abstract) identity, a world where difference is excluded, a proto-fascistic and indeed populist vision of cultural, political uniformity. This, I believe, is what Hegel means when he alludes to a time of “universal fear and bondage” (M199). It is the world of Roman bread and circuses, of terror and comedy, a world where the emperor can just as easily sentence senators to death as name his favorite horse to their ranks.

I cannot leave this section without at least briefly alluding to the contemporary ethical/political ramifications of such dogmatic indifference, in linguistic terms. It is simply too tempting to see a modern “emperor” and his Twitter feed in precisely the terms of vain judgments, where the copula is either nonexistent or acting simply as a mirror for self-reflecting self-enjoyment, where “reality” is nothing more than what the subject claims it to be. Of course, an “emperor” of this ilk will be indifferently fearsome and comedic. Nonetheless, the Hegelian analysis that I am proposing suggests that such a despotic figure can only arise within a worldly reality where the public has come to see itself as living in a shared world of vain discourse, where predication is simply the self reflection of the $I = I$, a “post-truth” world of “alternative facts” that is so completely dogmatic and sophistical that people have come to believe that their freedom is entirely exhausted in their ability to pronounce on and to judge what each one thinks the world to be. The actual world itself is accorded little or nothing to say on the matter, and what it does say is easily dismissed as “fake news” or “political correctness.”

Skepticism

Stoicism appears, in Hegel, as a form of dogmatism. Its reality, as a pure self-positing, through the universal principles that it inscribes on the world, is the vain $I = I$. In this expression, the copula is a neutral medium, a lens or a mirror through which subject and predicate (subject and object) are self-reflected. The bad faith of

Stoicism is its own hypocrisy, which keeps it from realizing the empty vanity, the tautological tediousness of its pronouncements. The removal of such hypocrisy brings forth the truth of Stoicism: its lack of content is the nugatory aspect of the purely reflective “relation” between subject and object/predicate.

Of course, the problem is that most of the history of philosophy, whether “rationalist” or “empirical,” “idealist” or “materialist,” proves itself to be dogmatic! To the extent that past philosophers have generally imposed their metaphysical principles on the world (the self, substance, the monad, etc.), we are left with the shocking conclusion that the history of philosophy is the history of dogmatic thought. But why would such thought even have a history? Would dogmatism not simply repeat its vain assertions endlessly and without the *narrative* outcome that “history” requires? On Hegel’s reading, the historical outcome that is visited upon dogmatism, qua Stoicism, is supplied by Skepticism: dogmatism necessarily (dialectically) collapses into skepticism. Put differently, the emptiness of the dogmatic copula inevitably undermines the judgments that are dogmatically pronounced.

Presented in this way, we see how skepticism is “the actual experience of what the freedom of thought is” (M202/W3, 159). It is “a negative attitude toward otherness” (ibid.). It is “dialectical movement” (M203), “absolute dialectical unrest” (M205/W3, 161). My point is that understanding this dialectical negativity involves recognizing the deflation of the copula between psychical/grammatical subjectivity and its predicate. Hegel expresses this idea when he writes, “What skepticism causes to vanish is not only objective reality as such but its own relationship to it” (M204/W3, 160). Once again, the “vanishing” caused by skepticism is only forestalled by “sophistry” (ibid.), which we encountered earlier in Perception and which has also taken the form of hypocrisy in Stoicism. The essential point I am making here is that the thoroughgoing, dialectical skepticism Hegel presents in the Introduction (M78W3, 72) operates grammatically, undermining each past form of philosophy from within, simply because each form has expressed itself dogmatically. And dogmatism, when divested of its fixating sophistry and hypocrisy, dissolves within the nullity of the empty copula. If the speculative reading of the proposition (*Satz*) involves taking the verb “to be” as embodying real existence, real “is-ness,” which can only occur through the “plasticity” (M64/W3, 60) of identity and difference, then neutering the copula can only produce the opposite: non-being; nothingness.

Skepticism is the destiny of all dogmatic thought, of all “argumentation [as] the reflection into the empty T, the vanity of its own knowing” (M59/W3, 56). It is the doubt and despair (*Zweifel, Verzweifeln*) (M78) that is experienced by each form of consciousness, that is, each form of dogmatic judging, when it is undermined by its own empty predication. What saves the whole process from sinking into nihilistic futility is the notion of “determinate negation” (M79/W3, 73), the fact that in each overturning of a dogmatic position something is learned. There is a movement and a progress where each negation is the negation “of” something, and that “of” is *not* nothing.

This progressive view, which presents the dialectical movement that takes place behind the back of each individual form of “argumentation,” is “something

contributed by us" (M87/W3, 79). It is "for us" (ibid.) to appreciate the dialectical role of "thoroughgoing skepticism" (M78) in the *Phenomenological* narrative. And who are we? We are Hegelian Scientists; we represent the point of view of the speculative truth, whose full communal, dialogical nature takes place in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, in the holistic system to which the *Phenomenology* is leading but which is nonetheless pre-supposed at the beginning. The *Encyclopedia* is the linguistic instantiation of the speculative proposition, where the copula of judgment fulfills itself and passes over into the form of the syllogism (W6, 351). In this fulfillment (*Erfüllen*), the Concept realizes its most perfect (*vollkommene*) form.

Coming back down to earth, we can simply say that, in linguistic terms, the constant overturning of dogmatic positions is given meaning retrospectively, in light of the greater narrative form in which they take place. To use a literary example borrowed from J.-F. Marquet's excellent *Lessons sur la Phénoménologie* (2004), in Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*, Fabrice is disappointed by his actual existential experience of the battle of Waterloo, which he finds meaningless and absurd. The famous battle becomes meaningful only within a greater historical narrative, where, according to my reading, the name/sign "Waterloo" has become a *word* full of retrospective significance.

In the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, as in his early essay on Skepticism (1802, in the philosophical journal that he edited with Schelling, at Jena) and again almost thirty years later, in his Berlin *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel distinguishes between two forms of skepticism. The ancient, noble varietal, which he associates with dialectical movement, the necessary negative side of any (dogmatic) philosophy—he cites Zeno and Plato's *Parmenides* as the purest examples—and, on the other hand, a modern, decadent skepticism that is associated with particular subjectivity and vanity. Hegel certainly had in mind G. Schultz's "Aenesidemus" which iterates a Humean skepticism in response to Kant's ideas of rational faith. However, Hegel's critique of modern skepticism, which is seen as springing from "one's own conviction," questioning things solely in order to come up with "an opinion held out of personal conviction" (M78), could apply to any argued metaphysical dogmatism.

In parentheses, at this point I can feel Kant scholars and Neo-Kantian Hegelians looking over my shoulder, asking how the critical philosopher fits into this generalized view of dogmatic philosophy, as associated with metaphysics. Does not Kant bring about the end of dogmatic metaphysics, thereby replacing it with a new "critical" variety? And yet, I hear them say, you seem to be saying that Hegel associates dogmatic expression, generally, with Kantian *Verstand* (understanding). Where does Kant stand regarding Hegel's critique of dogmatic philosophical expression? To Kantians, I would say, without addressing these important questions in detail, that the answer is ambiguous. To the extent that Kantian critique overturns the very idea of dogmatic philosophizing as taking form in the indicative mode, that is, of making knowledge claims (*Urteilen*) on metaphysical objects, Kant is indeed radically non-dogmatic. In fact, his criticism can be seen as fundamentally opposed to resurgent Spinozist dogmatism of the

time. However, features like Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories, his *Postulatlehre*, the ideas of reason, and the transcendental imagination can be seen as dogmatic. Further, other features of his thought, like the dialectic of pure reason and his theory of beauty (as the interplay between natural necessity and freedom), are clearly speculative, in the Hegelian sense.

On the other hand again, Kant's refusal to acknowledge intellectual intuition in human knowledge and, above all, his clear rejection of the speculative nature of the copula, in his critique of the ontological argument in the first *Critique*, must be taken as deeply and even fundamentally non-speculative and hence ... dogmatic. For in claiming that existence cannot be predicated and that such linguistic exercises mistakenly attribute an existential meaning to the copula, which for him has a purely formal, linking function between grammatical subjects and predicates, Kant is expressing what Hegel considers to be the very foundation of dogmatic thought: taking the copula as a neutral medium for self-reflection. I hope that helps!

To return to the point that I was making above, Hegel has two principal approaches to skepticism: one associated with the pure negativity of its ancient forms and which is inherently dialectical; another that resides in contemporary forms, and which, as in Schultze (and Hume), is attached to forms of dogmatic empiricism or facts of consciousness. And therein lies the key to the distinction between the two approaches. In order to be truly dialectical, skepticism must remain mute. Since it is the truth of the nullity of the copula, it cannot form sentences. It cannot pronounce itself. When skepticism does pronounce itself, it becomes dogmatic and, thus, caught up in the performative contradiction that I discussed in Stoicism. As Hegel puts it, the skeptical consciousness "pronounces an absolute vanishing," but at the same time, "the pronouncement 'is.'" Consequently, skepticism's "deeds and its words always belie one another" (M205/W3,161). Statements like "Nothing is true" are obviously contradictory, first and foremost because they rely on the grammatical structure of predication that they deny. That is why modern skepticism is treated here with Stoicism: because both represent examples of dogmatic thought when they pronounce themselves. It is in this way that Skepticism, as a "one-sided point of view" that presents itself as a form of "knowledge," represents "one of the patterns of incomplete consciousness which occurs on the [*Phenomenological*] road itself" (M79/W3, 73). This is where we are, on that road, at a place where Skepticism, as the mute truth of Stoicism, reconstitutes itself as a dogmatic school.

The bipolar aspect of skepticism, that is, how, on one hand, it can pass from dialectical negativity to dogmatism, and, on the other, how dogmatism, in its contentless vanity, collapses into skepticism, illustrates a crucial feature in Hegel's presentation of Stoicism and Skepticism: the instability of their relation and the constant oscillation that takes place between the two. The reason for this can be found in their philosophical ground, which I presented above: both, together, are features of Kantian *Verstand*, and of the ethical/linguistic actuality of judgment (*Urteil*) that flows from it. As we will further explore in the coming chapters on Reason and Spirit, the age of reflection or understanding, in which Hegel sees

himself living, is fundamentally characterized by the twin poles of dogmatic, categorical judgment and bottomless intuitional form, "the empty abyss" (M79/W3, 73) of pure negativity that lies at the core of subjective thought. The demand of the time, so keenly felt by Hegel (e.g., Schelling, Schleiermacher), is to overcome this bifurcated culture of *Verstand*. In order to carry out such a project, the stubborn immediacy of each party (reflective thought versus pure intuition, feeling, faith) must be reciprocally mediated. I have been arguing for the linguistic nature of both this culture and its speculative overcoming through an ontologically differentiated, hermeneutically open reading of judgment and its copula.

Without such a speculative practice of the copula, it deflates into an empty, neutral medium, where predicative judgment becomes a vain and futile exercise. The dogmatic pronouncements, which, as we saw, can ultimately be expressed as the self-positing of thought (i.e., principles) qua reality, in a form captured by the Fichtean formula of $I = I$, collapse into the simple "I." Since the copula is empty and nugatory in any case, judgments are reduced to an expression of pure selfhood, which, in Hegel's terms, denotes pure negativity, "the empty abyss" mentioned above. The futile oscillation between dogmatism and skepticism is a necessary consequence of the demotion of the onto-grammatical copula to the status of empty medium. Because the Unhappy Consciousness appears as the reality or truth of this state of affairs, that is, of the culture of *Verstand*, it can be approached in terms of the copula and its lack of mediating and differentiating articulation.

While it is certainly tempting to evoke, here, contemporary, social manifestations of skepticism (e.g., nihilism, terrorism, libertarian anarchism, opioids), I will save such reflections for later, recalling that, for now, we are in the province of self-consciousness. Language, in this context, might be considered "private," in a domain where I am conscious of myself, and where I know myself through an intimate form of self-predication. Of course, private language is still language, and as such must pronounce itself into the world. A world informed by the skeptical language of inner diremption is fundamentally unhappy, riven by unreconciled, inner conflict.

Above, in the master-slave dialectic, we saw how, as an episode in the attainment of self-consciousness, the body presented itself immediately as a linguistic sign, ripe for predication. Perhaps the self-conscious opposition discovered through Skepticism, between the inner abyss and dogmatic expression, may be comprehended in a similar fashion, that is, in terms of an intimate self-knowledge or self-predication between the "soul" or selfhood and its bodiliness. Indeed, while, in Skepticism, "consciousness truly experiences itself as internally contradictory" (M206/W3, 163), the new form of unhappy consciousness that emerges from this experience is one that "knows" itself through the essential contradiction of being both "self-liberating, unchangeable" and "self-perverting" (M206). As consciously "inwardly disrupted" (M207) this new figure is essentially unhappy. Throughout the text on the Unhappy Consciousness, the fundamentally dirempted private language of self-awareness, that is, the unmediated, unreconciled onto-grammatical relation between subject/self and sign/body, resurfaces in different expressions of the Unchangeable and the Changeable.

Existentially (i.e., in terms of “my” individual existence), the “inward disruption” between me and my body/sign means I manage and maintain my body as something foreign to me, a vehicle that “I” need in order to *be*, that is, some “thing” that I take care of, nourish, groom, and so on. This caring relation implies an “I” that is over against its body as the object of care. Such an “I” exists as an essential, determining subject predicating itself into its body as object/sign. However, at the same time, I am entirely assimilated into my body as the *being* of my selfhood and agency. Without it, I am no one and nothing. Thus, I am existentially in contradiction with myself. I treat my body as something factual, changing, ephemeral, over against a permanent unchanging self. And yet this supposedly unchanging, permanent self disappears with the body. I only become the essential nothing that I am through the vanishing of my inessential body/sign, through which I am nothing.

Onto-grammatically, my language takes place in my body and my body is my language. However, as my language, my body is no longer only a pure empty sign; it is also a (vanishing) meaningful word. Caught in the ambiguity between determinable sign and determined, meaningful word, my body speaks out. Yet again, this body of words expresses my nothingness, saying both what I am and what I am not. My body speaks out in its vanishing. According to the discourse of self-consciousness, as the existentially contradictory language of the immediate relation between body and soul (dogmatism and skepticism), as long as I keep talking, I feel that I exist. However, this “thoughtless rambling” (M205/W3, 161), this empty chatter is never entirely *me*. I speak, therefore I am, but what I say is never really me.

Above, I presented the Unhappy Consciousness as modern self-consciousness, the existential dilemma lived by Christian-era personhood, caught between immanence (Stoicism, dogmatism) and transcendence (Skeptical negativity), between our living, bodily individuality and a “beyond that cannot be found” (M217/W3, 168), a “pure thinking that thinks itself as a particular individuality” (ibid.). While there may be any number of fruitful nineteenth- and twentieth-century existentialist references here, enabling us to recognize Unhappy Consciousness as a contemporary experience of the dilemma between our personal feelings of immanence (body) and transcendence (soul, freedom, etc.), the historical reference that Hegel has in mind is essentially Christian. Just as Stoicism and Skepticism could only have arisen in the fearful indifference of Roman times, the Christian instantiation of such an “inwardly disrupted” being must arise then as well. That the Christian model supplants the Stoical/Skeptical one, as a form of self-knowledge, is primarily a matter of intimate self-feeling. To be modern is to be sentimental, and “feeling,” as an immediate and essentially mute form of self-knowing, is the only available means by which the Unhappy Consciousness may attain a “peaceful unity” (M207). However, such a unity, as an “actual existence” (ibid.), is always transitory. Happiness, for Hegel, as the immediate sentiment of reconciliation, is fleeting and essentially vanishing.

The Christian model that Hegel presents, as one pertinent to “our” self-knowledge as moderns, is, above all, one of inner turmoil and contradiction, and therefore one of a feeling of unhappiness.

We have a struggle against an enemy, to vanquish whom is really to suffer defeat, where victory in one consciousness is really lost in its opposite. Consciousness of life, of its existence and activity, is only an agonizing over this existence and activity, for therein it is conscious that its essence is only its opposite, is conscious only of its own nothingness. (M209/W3, 164)

And yet, in M210, Hegel outlines the coming dialectic of Unhappy Consciousness as one ending in “joy.” The Judeo-Christian narrative helps us see the dialectical movement that gets us there. Indeed, the Unchangeable (soul) is first presented as completely alien and beyond individual existence; next, the Unchangeable takes on the actual form of individuality. Finally, consciousness knows itself in Spirit, and it is here that we discover a feeling of joy. Referring to the religious model, we can take the first moment as Judaic, where the Unchangeable (God) is simply a beyond (the Father); second, the Unchangeable takes on bodily, living form in the actual individuality of Christ. Finally, with the death of Christ as a natural individual, Spirit comes to be. How are we to understand this dialectic in our terms, in terms of body and soul and then, in the linguistic terms of subject-predicate, sign and meaning, word and discourse?

Outlining the movement in these historical, religious terms allows us to see how the private language of self-consciousness, in its self-knowledge, is also “ethical,” that is, how, from a private language of self-predication, from an intimate relation between self and body, self-consciousness comes to entertain relations with others. However, the immediacy of the private language of unhappy consciousness, as fundamentally anchored in feeling, means that its ethical relation to others will likewise be stamped with the same linguistic immediacy. Put differently, the language of feeling that characterizes unhappy consciousness's relation to itself will embrace others in a communal expression of joy, which remains again an expression of immediate feeling. Such communal joy is just as fleeting and vanishing as was the feeling of happiness momentarily experienced by the actual soul of the modern individual, in her self-predicated determinacy. The lesson: in whatever shape, feeling, as a form of knowing, arises from the immediacy of the contentless copula, where difference is only there to the extent that it is excluded by self-identity. Referring back to our discussion of Sense-certainty, feeling is best expressed in the arch-vanishing words of “here” and “now.” In Reason and Spirit, we will have occasion to further develop communal articulations of such immediacy of feeling.

Unhappy Consciousness and the Empty Copula

The self-knowledge involved in Unhappy Consciousness falls within the immediacy of feeling. So, in this Hegelian figure, to be conscious of oneself is to feel oneself, and, specifically, through the intimate sense of being *at odds* with one's self. Above, I presented the feeling of unhappy, unmediated diremption in terms of body and soul. The soul is the transcendent element within us. It is the Unchangeable, the universal, unfathomable well of our subjectivity. On the other

hand, the body, our body, strikes us as occurring in the realm of immanence, an instance of our worldly singularity (*Einzelheit*), a term Hegel uses throughout the section and which he uses, generally, in a way that denotes the vanishing aspect of a thing. Bodily finitude is a reflection of the singular thing's spiritual destiny, whether as simply falling into the formless universality of "here" and "now," as we saw in Sense-certainty, as forming the generality of a natural species or, on a higher level, as participating in the human-historical and even absolute iterations of what Hegel means by *Geist*. Unhappy consciousness, in its singularity, falls into the universality of (self-)feeling. Miller usually translates *Einzelheit* as "individuality," thus blurring an essential distinction that we will further discuss later.

In that the body, in its natural extension, presents itself as a linguistic sign; it is possible to interpret unhappy consciousness as a certain linguistic rapport between subject (soul) and predicate (body/sign). This rapport takes place in the copula, which we have seen in our reading of Stoicism and Skepticism, as deflated to the point of becoming a neutral, empty medium within judgment. The lack of copulative tenor has led to the instability between Stoicism and Skepticism or, put another way, between dogmatic immanence and skeptical, dialectical transcendence. Such instability causes the two positions to collapse into one another: for Stoicism (losing its hypocritical sophistry) to fold into nihilistic Skepticism and for the latter to seek to pronounce itself dogmatically. The unhappy consciousness is the realization of this endless dilemma, without mediation, since the copula is simply a mirror through which I feel myself. For Hegel, "feeling" is that primitive form of knowing characterized by natural immediacy. Unhappy consciousness is self-feeling.

The appropriate grammatical expression for the state of self-feeling is the Fichtean $I = I$ (*Ich bin Ich*), although not understood speculatively, in the absolute context, where, as Hölderlin had noted in his crucial text *Urteil und Sein*, the copula expresses both identity and difference. Rather, "feeling" means taking the copula as the expression of pure self-identity. In the economy of vain self-feeling, the relation between subject and predicate is not really one, because there really is no objective predicate per se. What looks like a predicate is just the empty sign "I" that is inhabited by the self. However, as a "sign," the predicated "I" is nothing but an appearance (*Schein*) or an illusory being, a shadow standing in for the essential but absent Beyond.

In fact, the illusory I (as empty sign to be predicated) is the inessential body. I feel myself to be my truest, most essential self when I am pure transcendence, pure selfhood, pure soul, and bodiless. However, such transcendence is pure nothingness; in order to give voice to myself, to make myself real, I must articulate *myself* through that sign that is my body. I must "take place" in my body. But when I inhabit that body, I feel that I leave my "self" behind. I am no longer essential. And so on, ad infinitum.

The unhappy relation between essential selfhood and the body as *Schein*, articulated through the elided copula of the $I = I$ relation, means that the two are never truly together; the body is only a pseudo-predicate. It remains a sign and does not form what I described above as a meaningful "word," the holistic

cohabitation of sign and signified, what Hegel calls, in the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, “the actual soul,” a condition of transitory, fleeting happiness. For the *unhappy* consciousness, meaning (or essence) is always a Beyond, where, “the hope of becoming one with it must remain a hope” (M212/W3, 166). The predicate/body remains trapped in its status as an empty signifier.

I have expressed this common existential dilemma (cf. Sartre’s bad faith and freedom, Heidegger’s *Sorge* and freedom, Kierkegaard’s moral and religious stages, etc.) between immanence and transcendence linguistically, in terms of the predicative proposition. The same ontological grammar applies when the unhappy self actually speaks or articulates itself out into the world, through that instrument that is its body. The spoken, written, or otherwise depicted expression of selfhood encounters the same dilemma that arises in the rapport between the unhappy self and its body when the copula loses all tenor and is simply a neutral place-holder of identity. Thus, when I attempt to write out my inner-most feelings, they seem to be traduced in the words that I use. They are me but never “really” me. My truest essence is best when it is simply *felt* mutely. However, as we saw in Skepticism, such inner purity gets caught in the web of its own nothingness and seeks to exist, to replay the ontological argument in its own immodest way.

Because inner feeling does not recognize the true existence of anything other than itself, what it expresses in language can only be illusory, an empty sign or marker of something that is truly elsewhere, Beyond. There are two possible responses to this dilemma: either to configure the language of predication speculatively (Hegel); or to construe language in terms of a broad theory of irony (Fr. Schlegel, Kierkegaard). Hegel’s polemic against Schlegel and Kierkegaard’s polemic against Hegel show the essential rivalry between these two approaches. Nonetheless, both the speculative and the ironical approaches to language have this in common: each, in its own radically different way, recognizes that language both says what is and what is not. Their difference resides in their opposed takes on the onto-grammatical reality of the copula. For the ironist, the copula is the grammatical arena for paradoxical compression. For Hegel, it is the performative ground for hermeneutical openness and dialogical community.

In the Unhappy Consciousness section, the crucial dilemma that I just described (M207-09/W3, 163–4) is given a dialectical outcome, one that has historical tones, following the historical figures of Stoicism and Skepticism, and which employs the religious, Judeo-Christian narrative that I referred to above. This is presented in M210 (W3, 165), where the Unchangeable (God the father) “assumes the form of singularity [*Einzelheit*] into which the entire mode of existence passes” (God the son), before being resolved in “the third” instance as “Spirit” (God as Holy Ghost). A second, one might say, existential dialectic is presented later, in M214 (W3, 167). However, that dialectic is possible only because the historical background has been provided, through the actual religious narrative of the Father, the Son, and the spiritual Holy Ghost. The existential possibility of the living individual’s finding communal “joy” (M210) in “the reconciliation of its singularity with the universal” is possible only because God has been in the world and died there. Only thus may (His) Spirit be celebrated there, in the world, through communal worship.

The second, existential dialectic (M214-28) does lead to a form of communal unity, under the tutelage of a “mediator or priest” (M228/W3, 175). However, it is crucial to note that this early presentation of communal “joy” remains necessarily unsatisfying, unstable, and fleeting. Enjoyment is both acknowledged and “renounced.” Its immediately sentimental nature cannot get beyond the existential “certainty” of the living individuals who form such a community and their unhappy relation to the world. Such individual certainty is the subject of the next chapter: Reason.

The fleetingly joyous outcome that appears at the end of Self-consciousness is possible only because of the pre-supposed and “vanishing” unity that Hegel has presented earlier, in M212 (W3, 166). This unity is none other than the life and death of Christ, the “immediately present unit” in which the Unchangeable “has clothed itself.” However, in that the “Unchangeable receives the form of *singularity*” (my emphasis) such a “happening” must remain contingent, something caught up in the historical order of time and space. Thus, as a historical, living, singular individual (*seiende Eins*), as a contingency and a temporal happening, Christ, the unity of the word (the Word), must vanish. “It follows that in the realm of time it has vanished, and that in space it had a remote existence and remains utterly remote” (ibid.).

Finite contingency is a feature that Hegel assigns, generally to the things of nature and which always infects what he means by singularity. The *Einzelheit* with which Hegel repeatedly qualifies the destiny of the natural man that was Christ is highly significant and distinct from the Singularity found in Christ’s rebirth qua Spirit. Such resurrected, *true* Singularity implies the universality of the *Hen Kai Pan* (One and All), as distinct from the vanishing of natural things into the formless universal. The death of Christ is essentially ambiguous since he is both man and God, both “an object of sense-certainty” (M217/W3, 170) and “Singularity as True and Universal” (ibid.). Articulating the ambiguity of the vanishing Christ-figure, Hegel writes, “[D]ie verschwundene Einzelheit als verschwunden nicht die wahre Einzelheit ist ... [The vanishing singularity as vanishing is not the true Singularity]” (M217). For the vanishing of singularity to matter, to be meaningful, it must be “resurrected” in greater contexts of meaning, of which the greatest is (Hegelian) Science itself, as presented in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*.

For our linguistic purposes, the *vanishing* of the singular, existing Christ, in the Unhappy Consciousness chapter, can be grasped in the onto-grammatical terms of what I have called the “word”: an instance of wholeness, where the empty sign has been informed with meaning, forming “a present unit” that is a singularity, “the Word made flesh,” we might say. It is the residual, natural (flesh) feature of such singularity that lends words their necessarily finite, vanishing quality, the fact that words remain tied to signifiers and thus have mortal bodies. As we will see later, when we return to the singularity of the Christ-figure in the Religion chapter, even the most beautiful works of art, because of their natural singularity, can only hold essence or meaning for so long. However, as we should also recognize by now, the transitory aspect of meaning is a necessary condition for hermeneutical openness, through the ambiguous interplay of the copula.

Linguistically, the sign/body may be predicated meaningfully in order to constitute a word. However, such predication, through which the sign is invested with the selfhood of the grammatical subject, remains unilateral. That is because the predicate has not (yet) been grasped speculatively, as having its own predicative agency, an agency that must rebound on the initial subject, providing the hermeneutical openness that is a precondition for any sort of substantially dialogical linguistic community. For now, we can only look at words as the presentation of meaning, where sign and signified coinhabit the same singular, and thus living and vanishing linguistic form. It is because words have presented the never-ending endings of actual meaning that sense itself can be sought out and articulated at higher, more hermeneutically open levels. The communal "joy" (M210) or reconciliation that is briefly evoked in Unhappy Consciousness is the intimated possibility of more substantial dialogical realities.

Words die away and yet no *one* has the "last word." Other words follow, already waiting at the door. Think of all the words, full of meaning, that have been spoken, even since Hegel's time. Where are they? Where have they gone? Well, to the extent that they are anywhere, they have taken on existence in broader social forms: oral histories, anecdotes, accounts, official histories, laws, teaching manuals, archives, and so on. In self-conscious feeling, where we find ourselves as *Phenomenologists*, the vanishing words of the self-feeling individual are not entirely lost. Rather, they themselves are captured in a spiritual (human, social) form of community that Hegel presents here. As was the case with the death of the singular Christ, the passing away of the natural, living word may rise again in a spiritual form. The vanishing words of the self-feeling individual make up a community, a spiritual community of feeling, that is, the joy (M210/W3, 165) of finding its sentimental individuality reflected in a community of like-minded feeling individuals. Toward the last paragraphs of the section (from M214/W3, 167), we see how the individual relates to their community, which Hegel is clearly depicting as the early Church, whose "universal" (M210) aspect is its Catholicism. As I wrote above, the joy of the individual in the spiritual community of shared feeling is only fleeting. This is because the same dilemma that characterized the unhappy consciousness in general, the dilemma between immanence and transcendence, reappears in the relation between the contingent, feeling individual and the Church, which now *embodies* the inaccessible, "Unchangeable" essence that we saw earlier.

Thus, while the unhappy individual, as "the pure heart" or the "feeling heart," may feel "inwardly satiated," nonetheless, "in its feeling, it remains separated from essential Being" (M218/W3, 170). Worldly desire and work may be motivated, even driven by such ongoing dissatisfaction, by the frustration of remaining alienated from objective truth or true objectivity. However, in such everyday activity, writes Hegel, the sentimental individual only finds "confirmation of what it is for itself, viz. of its dividedness" (ibid.). And yet, in spite of this, there is a definite figure of community that arises in these pages. While the feeling heart may not find absolute quiescence in his shared community of belief, in the Church, he nonetheless does find ephemeral joy there, while participating in its rituals of "fastings and mortifications" (M228/W3, 175), in "practicing what it does

not understand" (ibid.), in "giving thanks" (ibid.). Such fulfillment is transitory because it takes place only in vanishing words.

According to the linguistic reading that I am putting forward, the community of believers that we encounter, here, in the Self-consciousness chapter, comprises individuals who are simply reflections of their own monadic dilemma, and thus iterations of the same empty copula between subject and object/predicate; soul and body; transcendence and immanence; saint and sinner, and so on. The lack of real mediation in the copula itself, that is, the lack of speculative, ontological interplay between identity and difference, is reflected throughout the community of belief. It is this very lack of onto-grammatical mediation that the spiritual community seeks to fill by importing the arbitrary figure of the mediator (M227-28). Indeed, Hegel expresses the mediator (Priest/minister's) role in fittingly grammatical terms:

This mediated relation is thus a syllogism in which the singularity, in its antithesis to the in-itself [i.e. to essence, subjectivity] is united with this other extreme [i.e. body, predicate] only through a third term [...] The middle term is itself a conscious being [i.e. the mediator]. (M227)

Of course, the above reference to the syllogism implies that it should be taken as the onto-grammatical fulfillment of the predicative judgment form, the move that I have already referred to, as found in the last lines of the Judgment chapter in the *Greater Logic*.

In spite of the "progress" that we might witness in the figure of communal joy that Hegel presents at the end of Unhappy Consciousness, which does not entirely obviate the essential conflict within individual self-consciousness itself but at least leads to the possibility of a shared experience, I believe it is crucial to stress the limits and even dangers inherent in such a communal vision. As I have said before, the community of shared feeling, devoid of real mediation and thus devoid of meaningful difference, is one that is inherently fascistic. In other words again, the lack of differentiation that we observed in the copula brings about a state of pure, empty identity and the necessity for an arbitrary, individual "mediator" who stands in for the missing "middle term" between the community and the Truth. Such a mediator can never be anything but the embodiment of the pure identity that is the spirit of the community. Indeed, the only "reality" that such pure individual and communal identity can form is that of ideology, a neutered "body without organs," one might say, on which any and all reflections of self-identity qua self-feeling may be played.

As such, the indifferent community will continue to haunt us, both in the book that we are reading together and in the world that we share. In the *Phenomenology*, we have seen shades of it in the Roman world of Stoicism and Skepticism, and we will encounter it again, at the end of the Spirit chapter, in the "Yea" of reconciliation, where the Protestant community is certain of itself through God's manifestation in its midst (M671/W3, 493). It should therefore be clear that although, in Self-consciousness, Hegel seems to have the early Catholic Church in mind, neither he nor I am claiming that Catholicism (or Protestantism) is inherently

fascistic! What I *am* claiming on Hegel's behalf is that communities of feeling, with no real linguistic substantiality, are in danger of becoming embodiments of undifferentiated identity, with individual, arbitrary "mediators" called upon to embody this pure identity, which takes the form of ideology. And ideology is the death of hermeneutical openness. As we will see, the linguistic substantiality that I am referring to and which Hegel sees as forming the actual content (*Gehalt*) of the speculative copula will only truly appear much later in our journey: through the revelatory forms of absolute difference that we will discover in Religion and Absolute Spirit.

Until then, the *Phenomenology* will introduce a series of attempts at grammatical mediation, of ful-filling the copula in order for it to realize what it truly is: the scientific syllogism as the most perfect (*vollkommene*) embodiment of the Concept. Such a syllogistic outcome takes place only in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. For now, we are on the threshold of Hegel's chapter on Reason, a much-misunderstood term that is quite simply defined here as the certainty that individual consciousness has of being all reality (M230, 233/W3, 176, 179). Such certainty is not something parachuted into place. It is another way of conceiving what we have arrived at in Self-consciousness: the shared feeling of spiritual community, now conceived of as the feeling of immediate identity that I have with *my* world. While this intuition may form the foundation for all speculative idealism, what is first presented as subjective certainty, at the beginning of the Reason chapter, in the reiterated form of $I = I$ (M233-34), must be demonstrated as true, a trajectory that implies the speculative development of the copula in the Fichtean *Satz*.

Chapter 5

REASON: MODERN INDIVIDUALITY

Generally, what can we say about Hegel's Reason chapter? What is going on here and why is a chapter entitled "Reason" devoted to figures that seem just plain unreasonable? In my view, Hegel's Chapter 5 continues the project begun in Self-consciousness: defining modern consciousness in terms of a contemporary culture characterized by Kantian *Verstand* (understanding). This means discovering the historical, intellectual roots of a deep, recalcitrant opposition, which Hegel sees as defining his epoch and which is inimical and even dangerous to the ongoing narrative of human freedom, and its speculative language.

In Self-Consciousness, we saw how the fundamental elements of Kantian understanding, namely intuition (as an expression of selfhood's radically negative core) and the immanence of dogmatic, categorical knowledge, were presented as definitive of Hegel's epoch, as he conceives it. These twin features have appeared in different forms: the historical forms of skepticism and stoicism; dogmatism and skepticism; figures of immanence and transcendence; unchangeable essence and contingent singular, human existence.

It is not as if Kant invented this essentially human opposition. For Hegel, it is rather the case that Kant's philosophy of the transcendental understanding has defined the opposition in stark philosophical terms and made it thoroughly actual through the performative language of his *Critiques*. Thus, as Hegel sees things, thanks to Kant, Truth (aka Absolute Knowing) has been sent into exile beyond the understanding, beyond human ken. The contemporary result is that Truth is now only graspable through individual feeling. And intuition, in the form of feeling, together with the articulations of skepticism and empirical dogmatism, have come to form the "three absolute pre-suppositions of our time," as he puts in in his substantial Preface to H. F. W. Hinrichs's work on religion, *Religion im inneren Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft* (W11, 42–67).

I think that the Reason chapter introduces this theme, specifically as it pertains to the German Enlightenment, and even more specifically, as it pertains to the main issues of the Pantheism Quarrel, together with a criticism of the limits that Kant's solution offers to the dilemma: that the moral law could reconcile the opposition between faith (aka intuition) and metaphysical reasoning (aka dogmatism).

Just as Kant's moral philosophy is grounded in the epistemological limits of his theoretical philosophy, that is, the fact that freedom implies the autonomy of

Vernunft with regard to the naturally determined understanding, Hegel's Reason chapter begins with theoretical knowing and ends with reflections on moral philosophy. Of course, for Hegel, the very separation of the two domains implies their unilateral failures. Indeed, in the Reason chapter, there is no reconciliation between the theoretical and the practical (moral) realms, between reason and faith. And that is precisely because the German Enlightenment, for Hegel, is characterized by the *Verstand* and its unreconciled oppositions. The failure of the fundamentally moral vocation of Kantian (and Fichtean) reason (*Vernunft*) to overcome the dilemmas posited by the understanding is, on one level, what Hegel means to demonstrate.

Another reason for Reason's failure is the individuality, even individualism, of the chapter's protagonist: self-consciousness as we left it in Unhappy Consciousness. In Reason, we are dealing with individual self-consciousness, albeit, now in its desire to know and be at home in the *world*. In this chapter, as in the other chapters that we have visited, the project takes the forms of judgment. In Reason, the judgment form is first theoretical (in Observing Reason), as based on observation and categorical thinking, and, then, practical, where the reasonable individual's judgments are meant to be universally morally legislative and *a priori*. In both cases, we are once again presented with the grammatical form of *Urteil* (judgment), its various configurations of the copula, and the ontological ramifications of its propositions.

What has changed, since our encounter with self-consciousness in the master-slave dialectic, is, above all, the nature of the object that is addressed. Here, in Reason, the object is no longer an individual object/subject who must be annulled through desire or penetrated in a knowing fashion. Rather, the object addressed by the self-consciousness of Reason is the world itself, "all reality" (M230, M232/W3, 176, 178). Whether theoretically, as the object of universal science, or practically, as all of nature qua the object of universal free will (through the categorical imperative), the *world* (M231) is the object of the Enlightenment individual's legislative judging. But who exactly is judging what? Who is the subject of this outrageous act of judgment that claims to take "all of reality," all of nature, the whole world as its predicate?

In the introductory paragraphs to the Reason section, Hegel again refers to his privileged formula of self-conscious reflection: $I = I$ (M234), a judgment (*Ich bin Ich*) that bespeaks, as we have seen, the lack of differentiated content in the copula, and thereby lends itself to iterations of subjective (transcendental) idealism (Kant and Fichte), as well as to those of ironic vanity. However, we must recall how we left the "I" and its "object," at the end of Unhappy Consciousness: the "I" was no longer an empty self, separated from his body as object/sign. In the unhappy consciousness, we have discovered singular self-consciousness as a vanishing word, as the finite, meaningful "present unit" (M212/W3, 166) where the sign/body has been fully, but only temporarily, invested with essence (qua sense or meaning) to form a holistic *individual*. The vanishing of this *singular* unit has taken place in a community of shared feeling, of others, a generalized spiritual community that forms the "world" in which self-consciousness, as a vanishing word, is involved.

The community of shared feeling at the end of Unhappy Consciousness forms the immediate iteration of worldliness in and against which Enlightenment individuality will measure itself. The essence that self-consciousness shares with its spiritual community (M210/W3, 165) means that the real world that confronts it is already predetermined as one in which it is certain to find itself, although the immediate nature of the reflective form ($I = I$), through which it will encounter itself in such “otherness,” guarantees that it will not attain speculative satisfaction there. Given the speculative poverty of the relation between the *Aufklärung* individual and its world, it may be tempting to simply write off the role of the copula in such unilateral predication, as simply a neutral medium through which the subject self-reflects, as we saw in Stoicism and Skepticism. However, I think that the changed nature of the subject/self here, in Reason, its status as a vanishing word, adds a new dimension to the worldly object in which it reflects itself, as well as to the copula that brings the two together in the judgment form of predication.

As the “immediately present unit” (M212) of reason, self-conscious individuality is a vanishing word. As such, the individual enjoys an integrative relation with its body. The latter is no longer an arbitrary sign, an illusory appearance distinct from the self’s essence, that is, from the soul. Rather the soul–body relation is holistically one: the “immediately present unit” is a meaningful body or actual soul. It is crucial to grasp this aspect in order to comprehend the “world” in which the self-consciousness of Reason reflects itself. If we take seriously the onto-logic of the $I = I$ here, then the “world” that presents itself as a reflection of self-consciousness must also have the integrative feature that we find in the latter’s relation to its body. Consequently, “the reality” in which self-consciousness is “certain of itself” (M233/W3, 179) is no longer that of empty signs ripe for signification but rather should *itself* be grasped as a meaningful word. The community of shared belief, at the end of Unhappy Consciousness, prefigures the world as a holistic, meaningful phenomenon.

What does it mean to say that the world is now a “meaningful word”? First, this implies that the phenomena of the world are not arbitrary or illusory but inherently significant. The phenomena of nature are fully invested with essence or meaning. The “soul” of nature is fully present in the things of nature, just as the self’s body is the incarnation of itself. Thus, the theoretical self-consciousness may observe nature as something inherently meaningful and significant, rather than seeing it as illusory and thoroughly contingent, that is, as something whose essence in-itself or Truth lies beyond it and occult.

Similarly, from a practical or moral point of view, regarding nature as a meaningful word, rather than as a collection of indeterminate signs, implies that it is ripe for moral legislation, or, to put this another way, that it carries within it a predisposition into which (my) freedom may play. Morally, the world as meaningful word underlies Kant’s categorical imperative, which invites us to determine our will as if our freedom were a universal law of *nature*. The same holistic feature, that is, the world as “immediately present unit,” means that nature may be seen as purposive. Significantly, both the categorical imperative and the purposiveness of nature are Kantian ideas of *reason*.

Second, configuring the world as a meaningful word implies that it shares the fundamental characteristic that I have found in the figure of self-conscious singularity: its vanishing. The fact that words always remain infected with the singularity of their body/signs, and that even as holistic, meaningful beings, they are and always will be finite, is an essential feature shared by individual selfhood and reflected in all of nature. Of course, the existential dilemma of being certain of oneself as “all reality,” and, at the same time, acknowledging one’s essential finitude is not easily accepted, even when Hegel promises that such vanishing is a condition for the bringing about of Spirit, which follows the chapter on Reason in our *Phenomenological* odyssey. As was the case in Perception, the self-consciousness of Reason can be expected to resist its dialectical demise by employing the arms of hypocritical sophistry, to bring to bear all the resources of dogmatism in order to stave off its inevitable collapse into the skeptical void. And so we return, once more, to the actuality of *Verstand*, where the judgments of both the theoretical and the practical realms are dogmatic expressions of the particular individual.

Third, self-consciousness’s status as a meaningful word, and its integrative relation to its body, means that that body is an actual, performative agent. As essential thought and body, self-consciousness’s act of self-prediction, that is, its self-positing as $I = I$, has real, performative purchase. Self-consciousness, as vanishing word, is a language act into the world, one that construes the world in its own image. The very bodiliness of the self-conscious individual, as *word*, lends its judgments, its predications penetrative agency. Such agency is, of course, a feature of Hegel’s ontology of thought, generally, that is, of how thought determines, negates, overcomes that which immediately confronts it. However, here, we might say that the corporeal status of the self, as word, lends it an agency that is more obviously invasive.

In this light, I believe that Hegel’s take on Reason, as the crucial expression of Enlightenment understanding, clearly puts forward the following idea: the self-conscious individuality depicted in Reason, in its theoretical and practical approach to the world, seeks to find itself there in a way that can be seen as erotically penetrative. This element is presented in the figure of Faust that forms the transitional moment between the theoretical and the practical spheres of judgment (M360-66/W3, 270–75). Reason’s certainty of finding itself in “all reality” should therefore, at least partly, be seen in this light, in terms of the erotic (male) confidence in the world’s accessibility, of being able to find oneself “at home” (*bei sich*) in the world, generally. Certainly, the Enlightenment individual travels the world, catalogues the world, dissects the world, colonizes the world in every way imaginable, knowing that doing so simply *makes sense*. The world is his oyster. His discursive judgments are the heavy artillery that breaks down all “Chinese walls” of resistance.

Most importantly, in terms of the speculative outcome that we are seeking, the performative agency of the subject is reflected in its predicate, the world. According to the onto-logic of the $I = I$, the subject’s status as a vanishing word is reflected in its object, in nature itself. In Reason, there thus arises a reciprocal penetration between subject and predicate, and this reciprocity is at play in the copula. In other

words, the “certainty” of Reason (of finding itself in all reality) anticipates a “truth,” one that takes place in the speculative relation between subject and predicate, where the latter has taken on a performative agency that rebounds, acts upon and determines the former. The copula in Reason will thereby come to express not just unilateral identity but difference. The proposition (*Satz*) becomes speculative.

The vanishing quality of both subject and predicate, as words rather than arbitrary signs, means their speculative relation may be taken as dialectical, as not fixed in any one position but rather, as progressing, according to a narrative logic that is predetermined as the outcome in Absolute Knowing. Hence, the vanishing character of Reason, in the speculative nature of its judgment structure, means that it may now show itself for what it is: Spirit. Spirit arises from the overcoming of the dualities set out in Reason, fixed in the logic of the *Verstand*. In grasping these unilateral dualities (i.e., forms of immanence vs transcendence) as speculative, as mutually conditioned and vanishing, we *move* beyond the Enlightenment, even beyond the existential dilemma of modernity. Indeed, through such movement, the vanishing aspect of subject and predicate, as words, opens onto the possibility of historical narrative, an essential aspect of Spirit. After all, what is history but a continual vanishing, one whose content is recaptured in a recapitulative, historical narrative, where the lively colors of the present have been painted with the speculative “grey on grey”?

The historical content of Spirit, as existing essence or meaning, is brought about by the interplay between identity and difference in the copula. As such, Spirit may become the middle term of the syllogism, the most perfect (*vollkommene*) expression of the Concept, supplanting the arbitrary “mediator” that we discovered in the communal figure of Unhappy Consciousness. Philosophically, recognizing copulative content means going beyond transcendental philosophy, which is always concerned with “the mind” (*Geist*) as the generalized account of the postulated structures of singular self-consciousness. *Geist* (Spirit) is now no longer an account of singular human intelligence in its knowing encounter with the world, on the model of $I = I$. *Geist*, as we will see, becomes the world-historical account of humanity itself. While it may no longer be fashionable to talk of “humanity” as a general concept, we might simply say that, in linguistic terms, in order to fulfill the *narrative* requirements of “history” per se, it is necessary to imagine a protagonist of that story. We can call that protagonist in the history of Spirit, “humanity.”

Enough generalities! Let’s look at the actual articulations of Reason and how it moves to the truth of Spirit.

Observing Reason

Observation of Nature

I have described the relation in Reason between the grammatical/psychical subject and its predicate/object/body in terms of the vanishing word. The subject of reason

has attained a holistic relation between body and self, where the former is no longer a foreign sign, an illusory appearance (*Schein*) behind and beyond which lies the essential soul. The onto-logic of the $I = I$ inscribes this happy relation of the “actual soul” onto the world itself. This means that in reason’s certainty of being “all of reality,” the Enlightenment individual’s new object/predicate stands before it as a reciprocal word and no longer as a mere empty sign that is ripe for arbitrary signification. I have also shown how the principal feature of words is their vanishing quality. The characterization of reality as a word rather than a mere sign explains why Hegel begins, in the “Observation of Nature” section, not with determinations of inorganic nature, as he does in the *Encyclopedia’s Philosophy of Nature*, but rather, straight away, with organic nature.

Determining nature as organic means taking it as a word. It is alive; in organic nature, the body is animated by the soul and the soul is fully embodied; the result is life. Organic life, as word, is a significant, existential expression of the inner soul/subject. Of course, life is essentially mortal and this is its vanishing, its death. For Hegel, such ending implies the spilling over of significance, of meaning and its recapture in more communal, shared forms. We saw this, for example, in the unhappy consciousness, whose vanishing is instantiated in the primitive religious community. In nature, the word’s vanishing is captured in the natural “community” of the species.

The problem is once again our old friend, the understanding (M281/W3, 213), which cannot help but break things down, analyze them, and categorize them. Consequently, even when nature is observed as an organic, living word or actual soul, subjective understanding cannot help but judge it (*urteilen*) in a way that separates it from itself, dividing it (*ur-teilen*) once again into subject and predicate, inner and outer (M266/W3, 204), in a way that denies the essential organicity of life (and the word). The understanding cannot help but put to death its object in order to perform its analytical autopsy. In doing so, the understanding denies the natural, living thing its *own* vanishing, its own significance, its own death, and, therefore, its life.

Further, the understanding produces laws that are meant to explain the various relations between inner and outer, and thus can be said to represent different copulative relations between subject and predicate within nature itself. Hegel insists on the arbitrary qualities of such laws. They are abstract, unilateral determinations on the part of the observing, Enlightenment consciousness. In fact, the laws legislated by the understanding are factitious mediators, stand-ins for real copulative mediation, as was the case with the figure of the mediator who appeared in the spiritual community at the end of Unhappy Consciousness.

The abstraction of the observed and understood relationship between inner and outer, within nature itself, reaches its apex in the concept of purposiveness (*Zweckbegriff*, M256/W3, 198), the notion imported from Kant’s *Third Critique* (of *Judgement*). As a Kantian idea of reason, the purposiveness of nature remains a pure Beyond, an abstract mediation that only hints at the Hegelian truth of the matter: the concept per se. I do not mean to wave the term *Begriff* in the air as part of some all-explaining Hegelian mantra (“The Truth is the Concept”). By “concept,” I mean the ful-filling of the judgment’s copula through the mediating middle term

between subject and predicate that is nothing other than the realized movement of identity and difference between the two. "Purposiveness" is only a pale reflection of this truth. As an idea of Kantian reason, it remains a subjective determination of nature, a determination that is endlessly removed from its object. "Purposiveness" does away with the essential "wordiness" (if I can be allowed this term, here) of the predicate, relegating it, once again, to the status of empty, determinable sign.

In other words, the idea of purposiveness implies that nature, as observed, offers us *signs* that may be deciphered in order to reveal a hidden purpose or meaning. The male bird's colorful plumage is a sign referring to an inner purpose: attracting females and promoting its species. In fact, as is the case in today's adventures in social biology, everything is "explained" with reference to one "hidden agenda" or purpose: promotion of the species. In the Hegel text, "species" becomes a "determinate generality" (M292/W3, 222) that is directly reflected in the actual outer shape or body/sign of the observed organism. It is the body as dead sign that constitutes the impoverished generality of the species. We can relate this epistemological point to the historical fact that Enlightenment biology consisted largely in observing (often after killing, stuffing, pinning) a singular specimen's morphology in order to then categorize it in terms of an existing or new species. Today, we might congratulate ourselves in having a deeper, genetic understanding of the distinction between various species. However, one could easily argue that studying genomes is just another way of "reading" the body as a sign rather than a word.

Of course, the highest purpose of nature remains totally *beyond*: the purpose of life itself. It is the transcendent quality of purposiveness per se that ensures that the observational judgments of the understanding (which cannot help but make judgments) remain abstract, arbitrary; they rip apart the lively bond between subject and predicate that we discovered in the vanishing word. In fact, in an apparently contradictory manner, the understanding kills what it judges by short-circuiting its vanishing life, by nailing it down with its laws and distinctions, that "hold apart" (M278/W3, 217) that which is organic. By dissecting life into the fundamental categories of inner purpose and outer expression, the understanding kills what it seeks to preserve, in the formaldehyde of reflective thought.

The language of observing nature takes place in arbitrary and shallow "laws," which are just so many ways of "comparing" the relationship between inner purpose and outer appearance (M276/W3, 210), in terms of properties (qualities) or magnitudes (quantities). The laws of observing nature are judgments that "hold apart" that which, as organic, is alive. The discrepancy between law-making and organic life breaks down into subjective pronouncements: either regarding "great influence," when emphasis is given to the inorganic, external factors (elements, climates, etc.) or with "clever remarks [on] interesting connections" when the inner purpose is given priority (M 297). In these cases, what is expressed when reason observes nature is only a *Meinen*, something *meant* subjectively (mine) that is pointed out in reference to an observed thing. In the Observation of Nature, we find the critical elements that Hegel introduced in Sense-certainty (*Meinen*) and Perception (properties). Although the nature of the subject (as a holistic word, qua

body/soul) and the predicate (as Nature qua word) is no longer as we observed them in Consciousness, the commonality between the empiricism in that chapter and the one we are dealing with in *observing* Reason lies in the actual form of judgment employed in both cases and, more specifically, in the diaphanous, unilateral nature of its copula.

Nonetheless, the hard-earned difference between the subject-predicate of Consciousness and that of Reason means that when the Enlightenment subject observes nature, it first finds itself there as the significant word, an immediately significant entity whose appearance is the holistic expression of its inner truth (even though its judgments then contradict this holistic nature). Nature, for the Enlightenment individual, has decidedly *romantic* features; it is a world in which it is *certain* to find itself, but one that it can only articulate through the understanding's judgments.

The laws that Reason's observation of nature comes up with are rather shallow and childish. The best that they can achieve is "the description and narration of the meanings and fanciful conceits [that reason qua understanding] finds in nature" (M287/W3, 225). There is a childlike "friendliness" in such "clever remarks" of "subjective opinion" (*ibid.*). Think of Gradgrind's definition of a horse in *Modern Times*. Such "laws" do not enjoy the seriousness of the ones that appeared in Force and Understanding, perhaps because the empirical laws of Observing Reason are judgments based on observed idiosyncrasies of natural appearance. They are obviously synthetic (e.g., "Insects have six legs.") and fail to achieve the logical, apparently *a priori* strength that science ascribes to the laws of mechanics and dynamics, for example, in the Newtonian laws of gravitation. Nonetheless, in both cases, the laws of science attempt, above all, to express the necessary relation between "inner" and "outer," between essence and existence, and, as such, are mere stand-ins for the speculative truth of this relation in the onto-grammatical copula between the words of subject and predicate. As we saw, the Force and Understanding chapter acknowledges the reciprocity of this relation in the idea of the inverted world.

It is tempting (and I cannot resist) to read Hegel's critique of Reason's Observing Nature as applicable to the ambiguous relation that we find today between our own Enlightenment confidence that nature (as *sign*) can be endlessly understood, interpreted, exploited, predicated, bent to our needs (and even "saved"), and, on the other hand, a kind of naïve (romantic) ecology, which tends to see all of nature (and not just the organic aspect) as alive, as a *word*. Romantic ecology sees nature as something essentially expressive, benign, and caring, something nurturing that we must look after so that it may, in return, continue to care for us. Such "looking after" or "saving" of nature inevitably involves the type of scientific technology (solar and wind power, electric vehicles, biofuels, carbon capture, etc.) that springs from the contrary "Enlightenment" side of this close equation. Both of these familiar aspects are involved in what Hegel considers to be Reason's way of observing nature; for both are based on the certainty of finding ourselves there and being immediately at home (*bei sich*) in it. Obviously, if we look beyond our little blue planet, to the universal scale of "nature," and consider the cold, violent

indifference of its cosmological features—quasars, black holes, stellar collapse, rebirth, and entropy—it is harder to discover any *gemütlich* “friendliness” there.

Hegel’s critique of Observing Reason does us the enormous service of allowing us to see how romantic and Enlightenment (technological) views of nature are necessarily complicit. This complicity is an essential feature of the bifurcated culture of *Verstand* (understanding) that Hegel ascribes to modernity and which he seeks to overcome. For the *Verstand* carries the fundamental binary division between “inner” and “outer” within itself, as I explained above with reference to the “absolute presuppositions of our time,” as he puts it in his Preface to Hinrichs’s *Philosophy of Religion*. A culture of understanding is one of both intuition and categorical judgments (both skeptical and dogmatic), both sentimentally romantic and dogmatically empirical. From either point of view, we approach nature as Hegel presents it in Observing Reason: as *there* principally for us. Such a “modern” approach to nature should not be taken for granted. Indeed, there is a great possibility that nature, as the cosmos, does not care about us at all and that the organic life that we *are* and *know* is a miniscule epiphenomenon. Against such a nihilistic backdrop, Hegel proposes the idea of Spirit: the human ways in which we make, and have actually made (and known), our “home” in nature. However, Spirit is only significant in that it allows us to make sense of the miraculous finitude of life, where the vanishing words of nature and ourselves spill out into greater narrative forms of meaning.

Following the dialectical method that Hegel outlines in the Introduction (M85-6/W3, 77), we see here, in Observing Reason, how the failure to find Truth (the in-itself, essence, meaning) in the object/predicate qua “all of nature” rebounds onto the search for its discovery in the subjective *experience* of knowing of it. The consciousness of reason thus first looks for Truth in the object, in organic nature, where it fails, since, as understanding, it must do away with the very thing it intends to know: life (and death), leaving only the empty truth of an essential “beyond,” in the final form of purposiveness. Consequently, the knowing self will then seek the in-itself in its actual *knowing* of nature, in the natural features of psychology.

Such a psychology must be a reflection of what it has itself known through the understanding’s observation of nature. In other words, the psyche that observes nature and judges it in a way that bifurcates the life it finds there, into inner and outer, into inner purposiveness and empty signs, will itself produce a psychology of the *Verstand*, one where the holistic life of the self as *word* is broken into categories and faculties. Of course, as we know, the truth (qua Spirit) is in the reciprocal movement (copula) between knowing subject and its predicate/object (as all of nature), that is, in the copula as an expression of identity and difference, as we got an inkling of it earlier, in Force and Understanding’s inverted world.

However, before realizing the speculative nature of the copula between self and world, Enlightenment Reason is thrown back on itself, from its unsuccessful, unilateral attempt to predicate the truth in nature as Other. Now, Reason will attempt to get at the truth through Enlightenment psychology, that is, by observing itself as a *natural* knowing thing. Finally, the Enlightenment individual, frustrated

in his attempt to penetrate nature through theoretical knowledge, to *know* himself where he is already certain to be “at home,” will resort to more invasive and active means of knowing, through individual action. However, the rather brutal lesson for Reason, and its truth in Spirit, is that it is precisely its form of individuality that destines Reason to fail. It must fail, otherwise it would not (qua the Enlightenment) be *past* and thus, as such, part of Spirit's historical narrative, where, we might say, it has learned its lesson. But first, to (natural) psychology.

Observation of Self-consciousness in Its Purity and in Its Relation to External Actuality. Logical and Psychological Laws (M298–308/W3, 226–32)

Having failed to find itself in the observation of nature, consciousness will turn back on itself—looking for the Truth *in itself*, as subject. The ambiguity here is that in looking for the truth in itself, it is taking itself as a natural object, something to which it stands opposed as a free self, independent of natural determinacy. The naturalistic aspect is a general feature of German Enlightenment psychology, which is fundamentally a faculty-psychology, inspired, again, by Kant's description of the understanding. However, Enlightenment psychology (cf. Christian Garve, Schultz et al.) reifies the Kantian categories, ascribing to them an objective, natural reality or “being” that Kant himself eschews. For much of German Enlightenment psychology, the self, as the object of psychological thought, is essentially a thing and as such is conditioned by the content that falls into it. The categories are thought of as essentially passive receptacles for sense data, of a heteronomous content that is imposed upon it by nature. In that such psychology sees the psyche as a natural entity that is materially acted upon by nature, we can say that it is essentially materialistic (see Reid, “Friedrich Schlegel [2019]”).

In other words, rather than being deduced from universal laws of thought (i.e., as they are deduced, in Kant, from the table of logical judgments), in Enlightenment psychology, the reified categories are taken as “something found, something that is given,” as providing for “a fixed content” (M299/W3, 227). The categories are thus “torn out of [the] context of movement,” a context elucidated in Hegel's *Logics*, where the categories display themselves as self-moving thought in its dialectical approach to otherness. The *Logical* context (of Science) is where the categories “show themselves to be what they are in truth, viz. single *vanishing* moments whose truth is only the whole movement of thought, knowing itself” (M299, my emphasis).

Misreading Kant's (and Fichte's) idea of *theoretical* knowledge, German Enlightenment psychology considers the knowing self to be a natural *thing* that is essentially conditioned by nature. Such material conditioning is construed as following certain natural laws, which determine the psychological self in its own material nature. In fact, the discovery and explication of such natural psychological laws was perhaps the fondest project of the Enlightenment: to find or instill reason beyond the frontier of rational thought, to rationally colonize the hidden depths of the human psyche, with all of its spooky, unconscious dream-like features (clairvoyance, somnambulance, delusions, madness, etc.).

If Hegel's Reason means self-consciousness being certain of itself in all of nature, then the natural self was surely the most daunting province to be explored, the apparently lawless final frontier, crying out for the imposition of "natural" laws. However, as I mentioned, this means taking the self as something that it is not: an object, in a way that is thoroughly appropriate to the analytical ways and means of the *Verstand*. Briefly, in Enlightenment psychology, the understanding reflects upon itself as an object and is conscious of itself as an objectified "being" comprised of its own categories. Such psychology, in objectifying the self, does away with its dynamic life, which Hegel associates with the movement of thought. Nonetheless, it is crucial to realize that here, in psychology, we may note the beginnings of a reversal with regard to the natural world that was *observed* by Reason in the preceding section. Indeed, if we are attentive, we see that the whole idea of a naturally conditioned psychological self implies that the former predicate that was *observed* as "all of reality" or worldly (organic) nature has now become the agent of this new predication and, as such, has taken on the role of subject. Briefly, nature or the world has become the subjective conditioning agent that determines the psychologized self as predicate/object. However, this speculative insight remains for us, Hegelian *Phenomenologists* aware that Reason is just a chapter in an ongoing narrative.

The other reference, in the observational psychology section, is to what was called, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, empirical psychology. Publications in this area, of which Hegel was thoroughly aware and from which he derived much of the material for his own *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* (Reid, 2013), dealt largely with recounting anecdotes inspired by the most exotic, apparently paranormal observations (e.g., of clairvoyance and magnetism) in a way that not only titillated the reader but attempted to explain the apparently "supernatural" occurrences in natural terms, in obedience to natural laws of the psyche. Such explanations were anchored either in the overtly physiological realm (diet, stress, drunkenness, physical illness) or in its extension into the reified mental faculties (idiocy, hysteria, melancholy, etc.). The materialistic, mechanistic definition of the self, as a passive object tied into natural determinacy, meant that the mind or psyche was reduced to the status of body or, in the terms that I have been using, to the status of arbitrarily determinable sign. Consequently, the understanding, in empirical psychology, has once again done away with the holistic aspect of its object, the meaningful mind (*Geist*) qua vanishing word, reducing it to "being" a sign.

In Enlightenment psychology, the psyche is physiologically bonded to the behavior of the body, making the latter into a sign to be interpreted by the psychologist, who has knowledge of the natural laws that are at play in its object. Just as in *Observing Nature*, where the understanding's judgments divide its object/word into inner signified and outer signifier, Enlightenment psychology divides the individual into "inner" laws and the outer contingency of its own bodily behavior. M303 (W3, 230) provides a good summation of what such psychological observation consists of: "all sorts of faculties, inclinations, and passions" that are "recounted" in a way that arouses "astonishment" before the fact

that the individual unity of consciousness can contain such a “contingent medley” of psychical elements that are observable in the body, like “things in a bag.”

I used the term “individual” in the last sentence in a cognizant fashion, in a way that is not obvious from Miller’s translation, which, as I have remarked, tends not to distinguish between the singular (*Einzeln*) and the individual (*Individuum*, *Individualität*). In fact, the section on Enlightenment psychology is the first instance, within the *Phenomenology*, where Hegel actually uses the term in a sustained coherent way. Why? Earlier, I mentioned that “individual” implied a certain political reality. More precisely, individuality, for Hegel, is always *particular* individuality, one whose self-conscious agency is reflexively conditioned by the particular configurations of the actual world, and not simply by one other self-consciousness.

Thus, in the master–slave dialectic (M186/W3, 147), where one self-consciousness encounters another, Hegel uses the term “Einzeln,” or singular (which Miller gives as “individual”). On the other hand, in Reason’s psychology section, “all of reality” or nature appears as “the state of the world” that “has particularized itself in this particular individual” through “customs, habits” and “specific circumstances” (M306/W3, 231). In this respect, the individual is made or conditioned. It is predicated not just by another singular subject but by the world in general. This conditioning, and the particularizing of the individual, can happen only in Reason, where it is now “all of reality” that is supposed to reciprocally predicate or determine the individual self-consciousness as its object.

The reification of conscious thought into the fixed categories and natural laws of psychology produces the concept of individuality, as the “for-itself” of consciousness. That is, consciousness observing itself as a materially determined, thinking “being” produces what we might call a thoroughly materialistic, empirical expression of self-consciousness (the $I = I$). Individuality is the existence of this fixated self-reflection. The material, natural reality of individuality thus conceived means it can be observed, that its bodily behaviors may provide the material for empirical psychology, which is what Hegel means here. That is, we can observe the behavior of individuals in order to examine the fixed, natural laws of thought. “A new field thus opens up for observation in the behavior of consciousness in its actuality” (M302W3, 229).

Such predication is necessarily particularized or “specific” (M306/W3, 231). As an individual, I am not only singular but also *particular*: I behave in a way that categorizes me, that explains who I am in terms of the material agency of worldly conditions that act upon my own material categories, in a deterministic, mechanistic, and material relation. Rather than being a wholly indeterminate singularity, I may now be a man, a professional, a father, a musician, a criminal, maladjusted, delusional, and so on because I am conditioned to have these qualities, all of which bestow properties upon me. Of course, as we saw in the observational dialectic of Perception, properties always generalize that which they attempt to define as *singular*.

The result of such generalized singularity is (particular) individuality. This is why individuality appears here, in section b. of Observing Reason, in the middle

moment of the syllogistic triad of the Universal, the Particular, and the Singular. In this conceptual context, the ontological configuration of singularity (*Einzelheit*) is immediately associated with universality, either where the indeterminate singularity of natural things (*Dingen*) collapses into *empty* universality, as we experienced this in the “thisness” of Sense-certainty, or where the accomplished concept takes the realized form of the Singular Universal, the “one that is all.” If we take the general Hegelian syllogistic form as U-P-S, then individuality is a feature of “P,” particularity and not, immediately, “S.” Consequently, because the psychological behavior of the *particular* individual is attendant upon the “habits and customs” (M302/W3, 229) of its world, it can be judged politically; the individual’s psychological behavior either conforms to the status quo or is “set against it” in its particularity, “putting another world, another right, law and customs in place of those already existing” (*ibid.*). Simply put, the notion of individuality, in Hegel, is inherently political.

Hegel distinguishes between the psychological way of “understanding” the psyche and his own philosophical approach, as carried out in his *Logics*, where thought is allowed to present itself through its own agency and freedom. It is significant to my argument regarding the distinction between words and signs that Hegel presents the truth of his logic, in the present psychological context, as comprised of “vanishing moments,” recapitulated within the whole movement of thought knowing itself through differentiating otherness (M300/W3, 227). In a crucial expression, Hegel writes that “the laws of thought are not the laws of being,” and this is precisely what Enlightenment, faculty psychology seeks to do. I say, “crucial” because the statement stands against any (e.g., Schelling, Engels) interpretations of Hegel that insist that the *laws* of nature are the work of natural agency rather than the products of free thought as it inscribes or predicates itself into nature. In fact, both thought and nature are, in themselves, lawless; nature, because it is essentially contingent; thought, because laws, for Hegel, stand against thought’s essential freedom. Laws are heteronomous, arbitrary mediations between the bifurcated expressions of inner and outer. As I wrote above, they are pale stand-ins for the real speculative nature of the copula qua concept. Thus, here in M300, the “laws of thought” are only “so-called laws.”

The “so-called laws” that determine the relation between the world and the empirical (behavioral) psychology of the individual, understood as a contingent “bag” (M303) of idiosyncrasies, are reducible to expressions of “influence” (M306/W3, 231). According to Hegel’s critique of detached, observational psychology, the psychological laws produced by reason are no more meaningful than the ones produced earlier, when reason observed external nature. Here, once again, Hegel shows how the very notion of law contradicts itself. Instead of nailing things down, as it intends, law actually overturns them and inverts them, as we saw much earlier in the laws of Force and Understanding. In psychology, the contradiction arises through the legalistic expressions of “influence,” which describe the relations between the psychologically determined individual and the world.

Specifically, the idea that the world is an influence on the individual supposes that the world is different and separate from the individual. Yet at the same time,

the idea of behavioral influence supposes that the individual is immediately tied into the world and is entirely “coalesced with that world” (M307/W3, 232). Hegel describes this state of affairs as having an “ambiguous meaning” ([*zweideutige Bedeutung*] *ibid.*). In other words, according to the notion of psychological influence, the world appears as both “in-and-for-itself” and as the world “*of* the individual” (*ibid.*, my emphasis). Again, in order for the world to influence the individual, the world must be the individual’s world and, therefore, as determined by the individual. However, the whole idea of influence implies an external idea of causation. Thus, “‘Psychological necessity’ [supposed by the laws of observational psychology] becomes an empty phrase, so empty that there exists the absolute possibility that what is supposed to have had this influence could just as well not have had it” (M307). Further expressing the ambiguous contradiction in psychological laws, Hegel writes:

Individuality is what *its* world is, the world that is its *own*. Individuality is itself the cycle of its action in which it has exhibited itself as an actual world and as simply and solely the unity of the world as given and the world it has made; a unity whose sides do not fall apart, as in the conception of psychological law, into a world that in itself is already given, and an individuality existing on its own account. Or, if those sides are thus considered each by itself, there exists no necessity and no law of their connection with one another. (M308)

In other words still, either there is “influence,” in which case world and self are immediately complicit, in which case there is no “influence” (and no psychological law), or there is no influence and therefore no psychological law (which is an expression of that influence).

The legalistic aspect of observational psychology shows that its “reason” is, in fact, the workings of the *Verstand*, whose psychological account of particularized individuality turns out to be bogus because it relies on the contradictory notion of “influence,” upon which its laws rely. However, the contradiction points to something that is dialectically true, a fact expressed by Hegel’s above-quoted qualification of the laws of psychological influence as holding “ambiguous meaning.” On one hand, psychological laws, in implying that the individual is thoroughly determined by the world, make him a predicate of the world’s determinate agency. On the other hand, this act of predication can never be the unilateral case, simply because the individual is always already a subject, one who conversely determines the world that they live in (and is ambiguously determined by, and so on). The true relation between the individual psyche and their world is consequently reciprocal, dynamic, and integrative. We might say that the relation is phenomenological, in the contemporary sense of being-in-the-world, rather than “psychological,” in the sense of Observing Reason.

In the onto-grammatical terms that I have been exploring, we can say that the empty, neutral copula of “observing reason,” which implies a disengaged subjective view of the object/predicate through the copula as lens or instrument, avoids the very truth that it seeks to find. According to the observational model, the predicate

can be nothing more than an empty sign ripe for alien signification. We have seen, however, that reason itself implies that both the particularly determined individual and its world present themselves to one another as meaningful *words*, and not merely signs. Indeed, the “certainty” of this truth is exactly what constitutes, for Hegel, reason; the idea of “being all reality” (or world) already presupposes a reciprocal interplay of significance between the individual and her world. However, this speculative outcome or truth can only come about through the evanescence of the onto-grammatical relation between the individual and his world that is presented in the Reason chapter. Briefly, reason must show itself to be what it is, not just in its certainty but in its truth: spirit.

However, the trial by which the *certainty* of Reason may become its truth in spirit cannot take place without the mediating resistance and interference of the *Verstand*, fully operable in Observing Reason. Although it means to do the opposite, the understanding actually threatens the certainty of Reason by breaking down its monolithic self-assurance into fixed oppositions that are revealed to be doubtful, self-contradictory, and ambiguous. In the present case, Hegel presents the notion of behavioral, psychological “influence” as self-contradictory and therefore revelatory of the true complicity that takes place in the mind-ful, reciprocal encounter between the individual and their world: in the “unity of the world as given and the world it has made; a unity whose sides do not fall apart” (M308/W3, 232). This unity implies the meaningful vanishing of individuality itself, and its world.

However, if I describe the true, meaningful relation between the individual and their world in terms of a reciprocal vanishing, am I not then affirming that *Individualität* itself is a vanishing word, something that I have been celebrating for its meaningfulness? On Hegel’s terms, I believe the answer is first and foremost, “not really.” The individual of the Reason chapter, as portrayed in empirical/Enlightenment psychology, is above all the creation of the *Verstand*. As such, its reified, fixated subsistence is objectified, categorized, and essentially observable. The features associated with such empirical observation (through the individual’s behaviors) are once again akin to the properties that we first encountered in Perception.

Indeed, as the object of empirical observation, the psychologized self seeks to understand itself in a way that does away with its essential selfhood, which is tied to its true status as a “vanishing moment,” as a vanishing word. In fact, in its hard individuality, the individual seeks to maintain itself as really *something* permanent, a natural sign, informed with fixed, permanent categories and properties obeying the natural psychological laws that have been, and always will be, determined by the world. Conversely, “the world” appears to the individual of Reason as a theatre of signs, open to her own unilateral predication. The hard, substantive “tät” in *Individualität* says it all. In saying I am an individual, I am saying that I am forever, permanent, a substance, a lasting sign or predicate. However, because the world appears to my individuality as mine, I cannot help but reduce *it* to the status of predicate/sign. In other words, the notion of “individuality” seems to short-circuit subjective agency altogether, thereby suspending any chance of vanishing and

meaning. If meaning is to be arrived at, it must take place in spite of, or behind the back of, individuality.

In Hegel, there is an inescapably natural aspect to individuality, one which maintains its hard particularity, nature's syllogistic middle position in the systematic movement of the Concept. Individuality stands as the lunar, fixated, unchanging aspect of nature, expressed in the mechanical determinism of its laws. Individuality must therefore be distinguished from natural *singularity*, which I presented in Sense-certainty as the destiny of finite natural things, to collapse into forms of universality (including the generality of species). And indeed, this is how natural things should be viewed, scientifically, speculatively, that is, as necessarily *finite*, as dying away into greater configurations of meaning that imply their vanishing. The evanescent quality of singular things reflects the "cometary" element within the syllogistic "moment" of particularity (Reid, "Comets and Moons," 2014), where the dissolution of fixated entities gives rise to their essential being-for-another, whereby they are presented "for-us," for (Hegelian) Science. Particular individuality, in its recalcitrant, lunar for-itselfness, turns its back on the deep conceptual, syllogistic complicity between the singular and the universal, one that is ultimately affirmed and embodied in the system itself as the Singular Universal. Of course, the speculative truth of spirit shows the individual's recalcitrance to be futile. As always also natural, his individuality is betrayed by his singularity. Consequently, the individual of Observing Reason is both a natural sign and, for us, a vanishing word, and is so to the extent that we may find his individuality meaningful. Of course, as we have seen, meaning implies not only vanishing but (speculative) ambiguity.

As I mentioned above, a parallel can be made between what is happening here and what we saw in Force and Understanding. In spite of their differences, both moments use the notion of "law" in order to reveal something deeper and more speculative. In both cases, laws are presented as inherently insufficient, as stand-ins for something else, something that is revealed by the ambiguous notion of law itself. Law implies unilateral determination, for example, through the notion of force or here, through influence. However, Hegel shows how these notions produce inverted worlds, where what was supposed to be influenced or *determined* shows itself to be *determining*. Grammatically, we have seen how "law" involves ambiguous predication and thus operates as a stand-in for the speculative copula, the theatre where self-identity is shown to be expressive of difference. In empirical/Enlightenment psychology, the "inverted world" is one where the laws governing the observed *individual*, with its fixed categories and its established influences and behaviors, turn out to be more ambiguous and meaningful than what is immediately understood.

The final section of Observing Reason presents us with the unpleasant, unpalatable non-speculative outcome of Observing Reason, that is, the full extent of its epistemological and existential error. I include "existential" because in Physiognomy and Phrenology, we recognize fundamental aspects of modern individuality itself, aspects that Hegel has derived through the two preceding sections on Observing Nature and Psychology. In the final section of Observing

Reason, our reified, recalcitrant individuality shows itself to be what it is: a self-reflecting organism, stubbornly refusing the ambiguity of its relation to the world, holding fast to its status as (self-)predicated sign, while denying the worldly agency that such predication implies. If modern individuality is ambiguously related to the world, such ambiguity (qua meaning) always escapes it. The recalcitrant natural aspect of individuality condemns it to the status of body/sign, animated by meanings that it does not recognize as its own. Observing Reason will leave us with a notion of modern individuality as the undead, a zombie-like creature that refuses to die, a being that refuses its own significant vanishing. While modern individuality, the protagonist of the Reason chapter, will get over itself, through the apprehension of its own essential finitude (aka selfhood or vanishing), gleaned first through erotic agency in the upcoming Pleasure and Necessity section, individuality per se will never entirely leave behind its monstrous status: an enduring, natural body/sign animated by a meaning that is never seen as its own.

Physiognomy and Phrenology (M309/W3, 233)

This section is especially puzzling to some. Why does Hegel spend so much time, here, presenting and criticizing apparently crackpot scientific theories like phrenology? Perhaps, we should just move on. However, on the contrary, the discussion in this section is crucial to further comprehension of the onto-grammatical distinction that I've been making between linguistic signs and vanishing words, in Hegel. As well, the section presents a clear example of a deep Hegelian insight into his own epoch as one that is undermined by the understanding and its spurious and indeed dangerous dilemma between intuition and categorical reasoning (between faith and reason; between skepticism and dogmatism; between romanticism and the Enlightenment, etc.).

The speculative dénouement to this dilemma, proposed by Hegel, involves reconciling these oppositions within an identity that includes both, a reconciliation that is possible because the speculative sentence acknowledges the ambiguous complicity between the subject/self and the predicate/body/sign, in a dialogical reality where each pole allows itself to be both subject and predicate (self and object). In doing so, each element becomes what I have been calling a vanishing word: a living, naturally finite cohabitation of body and soul, an actual soul (*Encyclopedia* s. 411/W10, 192).

Qualifying such onto-grammatical words as “vanishing” is already implied by the fact that they are mortal and alive. Indeed, their finite temporality is the condition of their expressed meaning, which always spills out beyond natural existence, beyond their status as mere signs/bodies. As I have been arguing, the “spilling out” of meaning is necessary for the hermeneutical invitation to otherness, within greater, more communal structures of sense. The discourse of dogmatic understanding (*either* as sentimental skepticism *or* as categorical thought) attempts to forestall the meaningful, speculative vanishing of its words. Ironically, it can only do so by killing what it wants to keep alive, for the understanding cannot help but separate meaning and sign (soul and body, inner and outer). Its judgments

(propositions) dogmatically divorce the subject from the predicate in a way that determines each as a fixed pole, unilaterally held apart by the copula, which acts as a medium or instrument or law through which the predicate/sign is fixed and preserved in arbitrary determination.

The understanding carries on its fixating work in physiognomy and phrenology, applying its distinctions to the immediate unity of which reason is certain (M 230, 233/W3, 177, 179), between the individual and its world. However, what the individual of reason now observes before it is the immediate, dead unity of body and soul, a fixed sign whose meaning lies within it as something foreign and attributed. The certainty of such monstrous immediacy must be questioned and this process begins in the understanding itself, with its own inescapable tendency to break things down, into, for example, inner and outer. Such a breakdown actually initiates the process of mediation that will allow us to move beyond the immediate certainty that we are initially presented with, and to move on to the truth of that certainty.

Consequently, physiognomy and phrenology first represent immediate affirmations of the certainty that define reason itself: that of consciousness finding itself in all reality. Phrenology, for example, clearly affirms the certainty that “mind is nature”; or that “nature is mind.” It is the very immediacy of these affirmations that makes them erroneous, ripe for mediation, which we will only discover by following the dissecting operation of the understanding as it carries out its work in initiating its distinctions. Of course, speculative truth demands that the fixed distinctions not stand but be grasped in greater *dialogical* contexts. However, such contexts arise only through the breaking down of the hard subjective individuality that is presented in Reason, and which, like the object that it considers, is also a product of the understanding in its recalcitrant categorizing. Briefly, the understanding must be grasped as a passing *moment*, and the signs of its discourse must be shown to be vanishing words in the speculative sentence.

Above, I referred to the idea that, on Hegel's reading, the contemporary culture of understanding produces the spurious opposition between what we refer to as Romanticism and Enlightenment thought. This cultural aspect is clearly at play in the physiognomy and phrenology section. For what could be more “romantic” than the fallacious idea that nature expresses itself in the features of individuals, just as it might also do in the weather? The natural goodness of a soul is featured in the beauty of the heroine, in the brow of the hero, and so on just as the villain's corruption is there for all to observe in his sunken eyes or crab-like gait. However, Enlightenment dogmatism will take this same romantic “truth” and make it into a “science” (e.g., phrenology), even one with its own sets of descriptions and laws. Of course, as we have seen, such “laws” are themselves expressions of the essential division between inner and outer, and pale stand-ins for a more dialogical, speculative approach to the copula, to the moving concept.

As well, the essentially observational aspect of this section of Reason pays itself out in the belief that the truth may be observed or witnessed in the actual things of nature, in a way that disengages “us,” the reasoning individuals, from the “truth” that we observe. Detached “truth” appears to us under our microscopes, through

our telescopes or on the screens of our scanners. It lies before us like a patient etherized on the table. Of course, such a view is easily recognizable in our own contemporary fixation on “neuroscience.” For is not the observation of “mind” as it appears in the brightly lit traces of the scanner screen not just a “deeper” form of phrenology? In both cases, Hegel shows us, the most cherished hope is that we may find our individual selves reflected in the observed, individual *things* of nature. It hardly matters whether the “bumps” of the brain have replaced those of the skull.

The lesson to be learned, in *Observing Reason*, is that reason must go beyond theoretical knowledge if it *actually* hopes to find itself in “all reality.” It must be practical (moral). It must act in the world as an agent. In doing so, it will attempt to free itself from the natural determinacy of organic life, which it first observes in nature itself, then in its natural mind and finally in the physiological signs of physiology and phrenology. The further, practical agency still represents the agency of thought, penetrating raw nature, negating it, giving it the new form as spirit, investing it with meaning. However, its agency implies a self-recognizing mediation through human otherness. On the other hand, physiognomy and phrenology imply the *immediate*, observed reflection of thought in nature, as if meaning were already there, in the signs of nature itself, without realizing that it is, in fact, the individual phrenologist who has assigned meaning there. The hypocritical dogmatism of the individual phrenologist (or the physiognomist) takes the signs of nature as immediately significant, ignoring the investment of his own individual thought in the things that he interprets. Let us visit together the section on Physiognomy and Phrenology.

Observing reason of the physiognomist now observes the individual as a self-reflected object (M308, 309/W3, 232) or rather as an object/sign that is immediately both world and individuality, which were held apart in psychology (through the notion of “influence”) but are now brought together as an observed unity. The observing individual is himself immediately both “in-itself” (i.e., an individual thing observed) and “for-itself” (individual consciousness *as* the observer) and in this sense we witness, again, the action of the understanding, whose bad faith bifurcates its object into inner and outer.

Although the individual body presents itself as immediately significant, the body/sign itself breaks down into bits and pieces, offering itself up as an ad hoc collection of arbitrary, natural signs. And signs per se, we recall, are always natural, arbitrary, and individual. In fact, the very notion of “individuality,” as *particular* singularity shot through with natural determinacy, cannot help but break down into a “bag” (M303/W3, 230) of idiosyncratic individual signs, as we saw above. To grasp Hegel’s point here, we might refer to present-day expressions where the individual body presents itself as the immediate unit of significance. Forms of body-culture like dieting, weight-training, plastic surgery, body art, piercing, and tattooing imply that “my” individuality is based on an immediate, bodily thingness, which, rather than being grasped as a holistic, animated word, presents itself in individual bodily signs. It does not really matter that the expressions of body-culture are “man-made” and hence, not “natural.” To the extent that I present

them as immediate *signs* of who I am as an individual, they are, for a Hegelian reading, thoroughly natural.

This is what Hegel expresses in M310-11 (W3, 233). Because the individual is both in-itself and for-itself (body and mind), there is an opposition wherein the body is presented in both its "original aspect" and as "also the expression of himself which he himself has produced." Significantly, in terms of the linguistic reading that I am proposing, the body is not simply an immediate "fact." It is "at the same time a sign," writes Hegel. However, as a sign, the body is meant to express something. It is proposed as a "being [that is] the expression of the inner being, of the individual posited as consciousness and movement" (M311). Significantly, the bodily relation between the outer and the inner is ambiguous: "To the outer whole, therefore, not only belongs the original being, the inherited body, but equally the formation of the body resulting from the activity of the inner being." In the next paragraphs, Hegel analyzes "what is to be understood by this 'expression' of the inner in the outer" (M311).

As I mentioned above, the body, as individual sign, must break down into an arbitrary collection or bag of individual signs, which, in physiognomy, are observed as various "organs" (M312/W3, 234). Organs, taken as "outer expressions" (e.g., eyes, hands, mouth, brow), are *observed* in action, in speech and work. The problem for understanding is that these expressions, as signs, are indeed ambiguous. They either signify something hidden, "inner individuality and not its expression," or they are taken as an expression that is no longer the inner individuality but something translated. In other words, in physiognomy, we encounter the same contradiction that we encountered above regarding the notion of "influence" and indeed everywhere Hegel presents the *Verstand's* division between inner and outer. "On account of this ambiguity, we must look around for the inner as it still is within the individual himself, but in a visible or external shape" (ibid.). In other words, the ambiguity of expression, of knowing the inner through its expression, leads to the endless and ultimately fruitless quest for a more immediate grasp of the inner through observation of the outer shapes as signs.

Because each observed outer shape presents itself as a "passive whole" or "existent thing" (M313/W3, 236), as a pure external, arbitrary sign, "lacking any meaning of its own" (ibid.), the language of physiognomy becomes, "a language whose sounds and sound combinations are not the real thing itself [*Sache selbst*] but are linked with it by sheer caprice" (ibid.). This is precisely the language of physiognomy, a pseudo-science supposedly based on the necessary, one might say, "scientific" link between inner and outer, and therefore superior to palmistry, astrology, and so on, whose links between inner and outer are so arbitrary that they cannot attain the status of law and must remain "nothing more than empty subjective opinions" (M321/W3, 242). As we have seen, it is the ambiguity between inner and outer that leads to a more speculative realization of the truth. Thus, although palmistry observes the body as a collection of immediate signs, its lack of pseudo-scientific linkage between inner and outer disqualifies it from speculative ambiguity.

M316 to M322 highlight the contradictions between inner and outer that are involved in physiognomy: these contradictions can be thought of in terms of

“essence” as reflection-in-itself; that is, when the external is seen as the illusory reflection of the *essential* inner, then the external can be no more than a *Schein*, an appearance. In these paragraphs, Hegel shows how physiognomy, in its failure to arrive at scientific objectivity through its observation of individual signs, is driven to increasingly spiritual instantiations of individuality, in the actual expressive activities of the organs that it began by observing. Thus, the physiognomist will observe and analyze the particular voice or the handwriting (M316/W3, 237) of the individual or, further, the individual’s facial expressions (M318/W3, 239) as evidence of some inner voice (M317). In these cases, the physiognomist is seeking to bridge the arbitrary gap between inner truth and outer expression, by discovering “middle terms” (M317) between the two (e.g., handwriting, voice, facial expression). But in each case, that middle term simply becomes another externality, another observed “sign” divorced from essence or meaning. Consequently, the “particular way in which the content is expressed is a matter of complete indifference” (M318). For example, melancholy may be just as evident in a lowered eye as in a slumped shoulder.

The futility of observing “a visible invisible” is further demonstrated in the practical domain, where the *observed* dichotomy between intention and deed (M319/W3, 240) again breaks down into the difference between what is “meant” (*gemeint*) as essential with regard to the deed, which, in turn, is always seen as the “unessential outer” with regard to inner intention. The spurious nature of observational physiognomy is ultimately demonstrated through the bifurcated nature of individuality itself, as a creature of the understanding. That is, what is taken for “external” sign (now, the deed) always becomes a new “inner,” which now must rely on another external sign (e.g., facial expression) as indicative of its inner truth. Hegel quotes physiognomy critic G. C. Lichtenberg: “You certainly act like an honest man, but I see from your face that... you are a rogue at heart” (M322/W3, 242).

In other words, it is the very nature of individuality to be analyzable in terms of an endless series of signs, and this, to the extent that individuality may always be taken as observable *by* the individual observer. Because the understanding individual sees things in terms of inner essence and outer (illusory) appearance, it is condemned to contradict itself in its dogmatic explanations. For when we express the inner in terms of the outer, we cannot help but traduce what was true and essential. Essence (*as inner*) can never be expressed without it becoming unessential (outer) appearance.

The existential dilemma presents itself thusly: on one hand, essence is nothing if it has not become existent, that is, “the true being of a man is in his deed. In this the individual is actual” (M322); on the other hand, observation undermines this truth by taking that which appears as a mere *Schein* (or sign). When Hegel writes that, in its actual deed, the individual’s “being is not merely a sign,” he means that the deed should be allowed to speak for itself, as a word. However, in observation, the deed is always reduced to “what can be said of it.” Thus, contrary to the existential truth of the deed, observing reason maintains, for example, that “it is not your deed that counts but what you meant by it as expressed in your face” (M322).

Phrenology should be comprehended as the truth of physiognomy and, thus, the truth of observing reason. Whereas Reason began with the quest of finding itself in "all of reality," first, in the form of organic life, the observational quality of its pursuit, as operated by the *Verstand*, means that what it really finds is death: dead things that are inanimate signs. Even when the body, through physiognomy's observation of the deed and its organs of expression, was taken as a "speaking sign" (M323/W3, 173), something alive, a word, understanding could not help but perform its autopsy, rendering the sign mute and decipherable, an organ cut off from its organicity, from its life.

Similarly, in phrenology, the brain offers itself up as a "speaking sign," as a living organ whose truth is iterated in the forms of the skull. As such, it is meant to represent the embodiment of mind, of "being-for-self" (M328/W3, 246). However, phrenology takes the brain qua mind as immediately observable in the skull, which is, in fact, a dead sign, a "caput mortuum," "a dead being" (*ibid.*) for which we do not have "the right word" (*ibid.*, my emphasis). As is always the case when the understanding operates the opposition between inner and outer, the relation between the brain (as a stand-in for the self) and the forms of the skull is shown to be ambiguous (M329/W3, 248) and breaks down. The lack of real mediation in phrenology's judgmental copula implies that the empty, vain determinacy of the "I = I" may run alternately in *either* direction but not reciprocally in both. Following the dissociative logic of either/or, phrenology judges that either the brain is supposed to be the cause, that is, the for-itself element, the determining factor or, just as easily, that the skull acts on the brain and the former is now the for-itself, determining agent.

This dissociated ambiguity can only be reconciled in terms of a "pre-established harmony" (M329) between the two, which is another stand-in for the *speculative* copula where the interplay of identity and difference produces real content. However, such an outcome requires that the predicate be acknowledged as something other than a determinable, empty sign, that is, as a word. Otherwise, the mediation between subject and predicate remains a matter of pure reflection. In the pure identity of the "I," the other is always Other, a not-I, a dead sign ripe for predication. The subject is exclusively, unilaterally subject, unaware that its predicate has something to say. There is no possibility of hermeneutical difference, where the word is allowed its own finite life, that is, its spiritual death whereby meaning is allowed to spill out beyond its bodily status as a sign. The Leibnizian "pre-established harmony" that Hegel refers to represents a paradigm of specious mediation, as we saw in the notion of "influence," in "law" in general, and in the figure of the arbitrary mediator who appeared at the end of Self-consciousness. The nod to Leibniz here should remind us that one essential property of his monads is that they do not communicate between themselves. There can be no hermeneutical community.

I want to finish our discussion of Hegel's take on phrenology by looking closely at M333 (W3, 251). I have written before on this paragraph with reference to language (Reid, *Language and System*, [2007, 40–57]), a reference which rather imposes itself since the content that Hegel deals with is so obviously linguistic, with

discussion of “signs,” along with a literary reference, to *Hamlet*. First, I feel that the paragraph bears a closer look because it seems to confuse a crucial distinction that I have been making all along, between signs and words. I have portrayed “signs” as pure, empty linguistic signifiers, as arbitrary, naturally formed (through *usage*) markers that are ripe for meaningful, thoughtful investment. As such, signs are the objects of predication, the subjective (in both senses of the word) positing that may transform them into meaningful words. I say “may” because in order for the sign to become a word, it must be accorded meaning. The word then takes on a subjective life of its own, one which rebounds on the initial subject. Signs, I have been maintaining, are contingent things, meaningless in themselves. For example, it makes no difference whether the word *Urteil* is spelled the way it now is or with an added “h” (*Urtheil*) as it was in Hegel’s time. As pure signs, the spelling is arbitrary.

My point about phrenology (and physiognomy) is that the idiosyncratic features of the particular individual’s body are taken as signs, in the above sense. As such, each organ or gesture or deed may be invested with meaning in an arbitrary way, where the subject merely reflects itself into the predicate. The skull bone is a perfect illustration of this. It is not a linguistic “speaking gesture” (M333) or word. It is dead, ossified, cut off from the whole person. However, in the paragraph under discussion, Hegel seems to contradict my interpretation when he writes that the skull bone does not even have “the value of a sign.” In fact, here, we see Hegel’s ambiguous use of the term “sign” (*Zeichen*). Generally, it means pure empty signifier (which he also refers to as the *Name*, as we saw in Sense-certainty). However, sometimes, by “sign” Hegel means a linguistic individuality that is “pointing to something else,” as he writes here. The examples that Hegel uses in the present paragraph are: “look and gesture, tone of voice, even a pillar or post erected on a desert island.” All of these *Zeichen* do indeed “mean something else than what they simply are.” My point is that by “meaning something else” than what they simply are, they have already moved on to the status of words.

What Hegel is saying is that this is *not* the case with the skull bone, which signifies nothing. It is thus not a word but a pure “sign” in the sense that I have been using the term, that is, a signifier. “By itself, it is such an indifferent, natural thing that nothing else is to be directly seen in it,” writes Hegel. Consequently, the “signs” that Hegel refers to here as indicating or pointing to something that they are not are already determined since they clearly have meaning. We might perhaps take them as symbols since, for Hegel, these enjoy a generally accepted significance (e.g., the rose symbolizes love). The skull bone, which points to nothing, is “an immediate being,” which, for Hegel, means a natural, singular thing.

In this context, Hegel refers to Hamlet’s apostrophizing of Yorick’s skull. The bone itself is an empty “sign” or signifier and it must be just so, in order for it to be invested with meaning by the character Hamlet. As a bone, it is “an indifferent, natural thing,” and this is what I take to be a pure linguistic sign, devoid of any determination. Of course, the ultimate significance of the skull bone does not merely lie in Hamlet’s soliloquy, which already invests it with meaning (“Alas poor Yorick!”), making it a word, but through its place within the whole play, in the Shakespearean tragedy

called *Hamlet*. And that well-known, much read, studied, interpreted, and often performed play is, in turn, part of an important body of work in world literature, reflected upon philosophically by Hegel but also by Nietzsche, and so on. It is these greater and shared structures of meaning that allow us to apprehend the simple skull bone as a vanishing word, over-full of hermeneutical significance.

Such greater structures testify to what Hegel calls *Geist* (spirit/mind). Phrenology exemplifies an approach to the world, which, in its observational individuality and its reliance on the understanding, demonstrates an impoverished take on *Geist* generally. As Hegel writes in M335 (W3, 252), "The more paltry the conception of mind (*Geist*), the easier becomes the task" for phrenology. "The mental properties become fewer, and... they become more detached, rigid and ossified and more akin to the characteristics of the bone." Again, detachment, rigidity, and ossification are the hallmarks of the *Verstand* and its world of arbitrary linguistic signs.

Hegel's point in the Phrenology section (and in Observing Reason, in general) is that the individual things of nature are, in themselves, meaningless. As natural things, they are signs devoid of inherent signification. The error consists in assuming that nature *itself* is the sole signifying agent, that its expressiveness invests such signs with meaning and that in our careful observation of them nature will immediately reveal its truth. When we assume this, we are in fact leaving signs open to any arbitrary, thoroughly subjective signification at all. What I see is what I get. There is no acknowledgment of the spiritual content of nature *as* we know it.

On the other hand, the existing, spiritual, hermeneutically, and therefore socially determined reality of the copula, through the acknowledgment of subjective agency in the predicate, lifts nature out of the realm of pure sign, conferring upon it the status of the word, with spiritual/mental content. For it is only in such "subjective" predicates that reason may know itself. Hegel's idea is this: in knowing nature we must recognize that it is always already invested and *predicated* with the structures of significance that arise in *Geist* (mind/spirit). After *Hamlet* (and Hegel), a skull will never be the same.

The arbitrariness of the grammatical sign/predicate is made forcefully, if rather facetiously, in the final paragraph of Observing Reason, where the absolutely arbitrary nature of natural things is exemplified in the example of the penis! As a thoroughly natural object/sign/body, the penis may just as easily signify "the organ of [nature's] highest achievement, the organ of generation" (M346/W3, 261) or "the organ of urination." Such arbitrariness is the effect of "infinite judgment" (*ibid.*), where things simply are what they are, the paradigm of which is, for Hegel, the $I = I$. It is this vain form of predication and self-reflection, through the neutral immediacy of the copula, that allows for arbitrary signification, where the proposition can just as easily express the highest goal of spirit, "life that comprehends itself" as the low bodily act of "urination" (*Pissen*). For the $I = I$ to signify spirit ("life that comprehends itself"), the copula must be grasped speculatively and not only "at the level of representation" (*Vorstellung*, *ibid.*).

The onto-grammatical reading that I am presenting explains the importance of what might otherwise be a puzzling reference to speculative language, in M345-6. Only a speculative grasp of the proposition can express the truth of

Observing Reason. Phrenology may say the right thing in propositional form (i.e., “Spirit is being”) but it

has no clear consciousness of what it is saying and does not grasp the specific character of the subject and the predicate and their relation in its proposition, still less in the sense of the infinite, self-suspending judgment and of the concept.

As I have argued, the “concept” is not something imported and applied to thought, but rather it is the speculative development of the copula itself, to the extent that it embraces identity and difference.

When the proposition (judgment) is taken as a form of representational language (*Vorstellung*), rather than in a speculative sense, then identity and difference (reason’s “own self and its opposite”) are held fast and asunder, without grasping the dynamic nature, the speculative nature of the copula. In that case, “the self-suspending judgement is not taken with the consciousness of this its infinitude [i.e. as the concept] but as a fixed proposition.” According to such a view of language, which we can call “dogmatic” or representational, “the subject and predicate” are held apart, guaranteeing a unilateral act of predication. Without the speculative grasp of the copula, “the self [remains] fixed as self, the thing fixed as thing and yet each is supposed to be the other” (M346). In representational language, the infinite judgment of $I = I$ is not grasped speculatively, as self-suspending, where the predicate “I” is taken not merely as a reflection of myself but as a object/predicate that is fully *subject*, an “I” that is a meaningful (vanishing) word, just like me but not me. Representational language, which we will return to further on, is the discourse of the understanding.

The individual of Reason, let us recall, is no more than the sum of his parts. He comes on the scene, in the Reason chapter, as the holistic expression of body and soul, of sign and signified, as an actual soul. He is a vanishing word. This was the hard-won legacy of his struggles through Consciousness and Self-consciousness. In her certainty of being “all of reality” or nature, the individual fully expects to find themselves in the world, and thus to find the world before them as another individual, as another meaningful “immediate unity” (M242/W3, 186), as a vanishing word over-full of meaning. The problem is that in attempting to find itself in nature, the individual first employs the resources of the understanding, in observing nature. This attempt is self-contradictory since the understanding’s judgments tear apart the object of its reflection, separating subject from predicate, soul from body, self from object. The individuality that the individual of reason sought in nature is dispersed into a bad infinity of individual lifeless signs, a bad infinity that reflects back on him.

Consequently, the individual of Reason, as a holistic, vanishing word, fragments into a “bag” of idiosyncrasies, into a whole universe of particular parts. As I have tried to show, the judging activity of the understanding is deeply paradoxical: its judgments are attempts to anchor itself, to maintain itself, to preserve itself from its own finitude and death, and to prevent its vanishing. However, its vanishing, its death, is the condition for its life and meaning. The sophistical, nay, the hypocritical,

aspect of its judgments allows the understanding to “forget” the fact that, in its dogmatic self-positing, it is taking its predicate/body/world as an empty, alien sign.

Just as Kant's philosophy pushes beyond its own self-imposed cognitive limits into the practical realm, where the noumenal is approached through the free will, Hegel's Reason will now attempt to know itself in nature through its free willful activity. Of course, as Kant had already shown, the free will may be morally pure but when it attempts to act in the world, all sorts of contradictions arise. In fact, the will, in attempting to act morally, encounters the same kind of opposition that we witnessed in Observing Reason. Practically, when the will is acted out, the opposition arises between the transcendence of moral intention and the immanence of worldly resistance.

The move from the theoretical to the ethical realm is expressed, again, in terms of the infinite judgment of $I = I$ and its copula. In order for the transition to come about, theoretical reason must be seen (by us) to get over its hypocritical stasis. The retrospective narrative line of the *Phenomenology*, whereby the speculative nature of infinite judgment is seen as the dialogical activity between subject and predicate in the copula, allows us to see how the infinite judgment of theoretical reason “suspends” itself, as a “self-superseding antithesis” (M344/W3, 260). In other words, the pure identity of $I = I$ shows itself to be self-opposing and thus open to difference. In having confronted itself as a dead sign, the individual of reason confronts itself as a complete “Other” to what it actually is, “being-for-self” (ibid.), which is what Hegel means by freedom as the life of mind/spirit. To put this idea still another way, the “end” of observing reason, as the negation of nature in the form of individual signs, brings about the realization that reason's role has been (and is) essentially to “produce itself by its own activity” rather than simply being “concerned only with things” (ibid.).

Transitions are often difficult in Hegel. At the same time, the challenges that they represent for the reader provide openings for philosophical reflection, which, for Hegel, and perhaps for all of us, are dialectical in nature. How we come to see that something we took for granted, when considered philosophically, turns out to be different and even opposite to what we immediately assumed, that is what philosophy is about. I tried to present this dialectical transition above, in the preceding paragraph: taking nature as comprised of individual dead signs brings about the realization that it is reason's own activity which is responsible for the negation of nature as “all that is real.” The further form of such negation is willful activity. Nonetheless, there are other ways to construe the transition between theoretical and practical reason. For example, the historical approach consists in simply accepting that, since Hegel is dealing with the Enlightenment in the Reason chapter, he must take into account and overcome the Kantian/Fichtean division between the theoretical and moral dimensions of philosophy, which Hegel associates with the *Aufklärung*.

Another possible approach is, of course, to see the transitions as arbitrary and awkward, to espouse a “you can't get there from here” attitude. I believe that we should always remain aware that, in the *Phenomenology*, we are dealing with a narrative structure, within which the individual episodes and the transitions

between them are justified by the outcome, by the conclusion. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth's sister Jane must catch a cold, in an earlier chapter, so that Elizabeth can become engaged to Mr. Darcy at the end of the novel. Only in this context does the "transition" to Jane's illness make sense. Likewise, the Enlightened individual must act in the world in order for us to envisage greater, less individualistic forms of social and historical reality in the Spirit chapter.

There is a necessary degree of literary inventiveness in narrative transitions, even in philosophy, without which the story would be thoroughly predictable and boring. While, if we are honest with ourselves, boredom may be a necessary, nagging feature of even the best philosophical discourse, a certain degree of literary inventiveness, of poetical license, may redeem it. Although I may be stretching this point beyond breaking, in what I am about to advance regarding the transition from Observing Reason to the Actualization of Self-Consciousness (M347), it is striking that Hegel ends the former section with an idiosyncratic reference to the male sex organ, and picks up again with a veiled reference to the same "organic" agency in Pleasure and Necessity (M360/W3, 270)!

In any case, it is remarkable that Hegel's initial presentation of the reasonable individual's willful action into the world, where it is certain of finding itself and being at home, is once again sexual. I say "once again" because we have seen other figures of desire, where the initial, immediate approach to otherness, through the agency of will, can (and should) be read sexually: in Sense-Certainty, where desire for otherness took the form of pure hunger and consumption; in the first paragraphs of Self-consciousness, where the first approach to the other as a consciousness-bearing, living object was through sexual desire, and here, again in Pleasure and Necessity. What these three contexts have in common is the immediacy of the relation between subject and object or, in my terms, between subject and predicate. This is the immediacy that we have seen expressed in the emblematic formula of $I = I$. In this context, it is not that desire arises as something different from the theoretical, as a new approach. It is not that desire or the will involves separate faculties. Desire is simply a specific way of thinking and determining the object/predicate/sign/body. Hegel's point is that the immediacy of the described relationships means that the object/predicate/body/sign is always and already predetermined as natural, therefore as immersed in life, and therefore as an object of immediate desire, open to predication. Carnal knowledge is, above all, *knowledge* because to know something as a reflection of myself is to grasp that thing as already mine, and such immediate self-reflection in otherness assumes its overcoming, its penetration, its possession. And yes, these actions can be taken as "masculine" tropes, tied to the expressive sign that is the male sex organ, the penis.

Actualization of Rational Self-consciousness through Its Own Activity

Let us look at where we are going, in the chapter on Reason. This will help us understand where we are. The outcome of Reason is spirit, which I have defined, loosely, as the historical agency of the human community. Typically, in Hegel, we

arrive at this “new” figure already at the end of the previous one, that is, at the end of Reason. However, the new form of spirit that we find introduced here is presented in its immediacy, as yet undeveloped, in its intuitive certainty. For the figures of Spirit, development will take place on a world-historical scale, with some form of “humanity” as the protagonist. At the end of Reason, we will find an immediate form of human community, but presented as anhistorical. There, we discover a community that is “the absolute pure will of all which has the immediate form of being” (M436/W3, 321). Within the Enlightenment context in which Reason unfolds, I think that it is fair to say that Hegel is talking about something akin to Rousseau’s idea of the general will.

However, there’s more to the story. Recall that Reason is shot through with individuality (*Individualität*). Self-consciousness is certain of finding itself in the world not as an amorphous form of thought but as incarnate in individuality. As we have seen, the very fact that “all of reality” (or the world or nature as a *whole*) takes on individual form in confronting reasoning self-consciousness reflects back on the knowing agent in its individuality, according to Reason’s foundational formula: $I = I$. In fact, the Reason chapter might be read as a series of articulations of this formula. Consequently, the community that Reason produces, as the general will, should be seen as an individuality. What does this imply? First, that there is a natural aspect to such a community. Individuality is always naturally embodied. Second, such a community will not recognize its own historicity. Recall that individuality carries with it a dogmatic fixity whereby it seeks to deny its own essential vanishing, through investment in its (particular) properties. Third, nothing is forever, and as some-thing, the individual community cannot escape its own finitude, its singularity, and, finally, its status as a vanishing word. For it is only as such that it has any meaning at all. This is another way of saying that the fixed community appears *to us* historically, as a past form. These three aspects will allow Hegel to present the philosophical idea of Rousseau’s general will as it *really* is: a fixed tribal community, likened anhistorically to the pre-classical, ancient Greek world, the world invoked by Sophocles, where national custom is rooted in the “infallible law of the gods.” Such divine laws are indeed anhistorical. Hegel writes, quoting from *Antigone*, “they are not of yesterday or today, but everlasting, though where they came from, none of us can tell” (M437/W3, 321).

This primitive instance of spiritual substantiality is presented as the initial player in Spirit: the soon-to-be historicized protagonist of Chapter 6. Reason ends in such a community, one whose very individuality determines its character as a naturally existing entity, but one whose existence has been demonstrated in this chapter: the general will as an individual, in its immediate individuality, likened to the tribal community of custom.

The communal figure that Hegel presents at the end of Reason comes about from the ambiguous interplay in (ethical) laws and their testing. Indeed “lawgiving and the testing of laws have proved to be futile” (*ibid.*), bringing about, “the ethical substance” (*ibid.*) of communal custom, in the same way that we witnessed in the dialectic between the changeable and the unchangeable, in Self-Consciousness, which brought about the spiritual community and its arbitrary mediator (M227/

W3, 174), and in a way similar to how the ambiguity of natural laws in Force and Understanding brought about the possibility of ambiguous inter-subjectivity in Self-consciousness. These similarities are not accidental. They appear because the necessary ambiguity that, for Hegel, is always at play in laws is symptomatic of that ambiguity that I am presenting as a kind of hermeneutical openness. As I stated earlier, laws, for Hegel, are stand-ins for a more content-ful mediation, one that takes place where the copula is developed speculatively, in terms of the identity of identity and difference (aka the Concept). The communal figures that arise out of legislative ambiguity are immediate instantiations of such hermeneutical reality. They are initially primitive, undeveloped and anhistorical instances of certainty whose truth must be temporally demonstrated. And that is where we arrive at the end of Reason. We are at the beginning of spirit's history.

The spiritual outcome of Reason is "for us," Hegelian *Phenomenologists* who have already (always) finished the book or can at least see it as a completed whole. For the philosophical apprentice, striving through the path of doubt and despair, such a holistic outcome is not apparent. Indeed, in Reason, the individual, having experienced the failure to find himself in the observation of nature, finds himself alienated from "all reality," from the world in which he is nonetheless certain of finding himself! In Hegel's onto-grammatical language: "the ethical substance has sunk to the level of a predicate devoid of self" (M357/W3, 268). Faced with a world of empty signs/predicates, a world of his own making (through individuality and its judging practice of *Verstand*), the reasoning individual has no inkling of the "universal substance [that] speaks its universal language in the customs and laws of its nation" (M351/W3, 265), and which is already implied and, indeed, is already there, "particularized in his own individuality and in each of his fellow citizens" (*ibid.*). In other words still, although the reasoning individual does not realize it, the worldliness against which he throws himself is the theater performance in which his actions (and his freedom) necessarily unfold. In this, he is no different from his fellow (particularized) individuals (citizens). The substantial reality in which they operate is the unseen hand that takes place behind their backs and, indeed, seems opposed to them. The individual "has not yet attained this happy state of being the ethical substance" (M356/W3, 267). The realization is for us.

In Hegel's evocative terms, the individual of Reason "is sent out into the world to find happiness," certain that he will find himself in the world, that the world is his oyster, as I wrote above. Such happy reconciliation is "an end" (M359/W3, 269), something that he must leave home in order to find, only to find that his goal is, finally, to be "at home" again. The ethical substance, the community of custom that arises at the end of Reason, will thus appear at the beginning of Spirit as a new family, a spiritual entity that remains imbued with the natural qualities of his first home.

The individual first attempts to find herself in the world by seeking to enjoy herself in another "independent" (M360/W3, 270) individual. This is the world of sexual pleasure, where "the spirit of the earth" (*ibid.*) has entered into it. As with many a young person leaving home for the first time, rational self-consciousness enters into a Kierkegaardian, aesthetic phase, a phase of

pleasure-seeking where they seek to recognizing themselves immediately and naturally in individual otherness.

It plunges therefore into life and indulges to the full the pure individuality in which it appears. It does not so much make its own happiness as straightway take it and enjoy it ... It takes hold of life much as a ripe fruit is plucked, which readily offers itself to the hand that takes it. (M361)

Pleasure and Necessity

In my book *Real Words*, there is a chapter on the Pleasure and Necessity section of the *Phenomenology* (Reid, 2007, 85–95). There, I refer to the language of sexual pleasure as being principally monosyllabic and therefore best suited to musical utterance. Sexual pleasure is essentially a matter of feeling, for Hegel, one where animal desire (*Begierde*) is satisfied in the feeling of union between subject and object. It is *feeling* that distinguishes the animal desire that is in play here, as opposed to the consumptive desire/satisfaction that we witnessed in Sense-certainty. There, satisfaction was involved in its own sensuousness and in the annihilation of the object. In Reason, feeling has become a feature of the understanding, through the acquisition of self-consciousness, where its intuitional nature stands in complicit rivalry with categorical, dogmatic reasoning. As well, sexual desire, in Pleasure and Necessity, involves another self-consciousness, one who does not admit to forming the object of unilateral consumption. Nonetheless, in both contexts, the satisfaction of desire is natural and therefore immediate and always fleeting. It is essentially punctual in its experience and, crucially, because of its punctual nature, always gives rise to renewed desire, satisfaction, desire, and so on. The compulsive bad infinity that the cycle of desire/satisfaction engages in is the “necessity” that Hegel refers to, repeatedly, in the section under discussion.

In *Real Words*, I relate this necessity to nature itself, construed as an alien, annihilating destiny that we experience as the empty universality of natural death. The feeling of dissolution or death appears to the pleasure-seeking consciousness as the result of an “abstract necessity,” an “empty and alien necessity,” a “lifeless necessity” on which the individual is “pulverized” (M364-5/W3, 273–4). As Hegel writes (M364), “in taking hold of life, [the pleasure-seeking individual really] lays hold on death.”

In my earlier work, I show how the best literary reference for this section is not so much Goethe's early Faust-Fragment, although Hegel does cite it (M360), as Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*. I acknowledge my indebtedness to Kierkegaard for this interpretation, specifically for his insights into the arithmetical futility of Don Giovanni's satisfactions and for his idea that the stone statue (Comandatore) who annihilates the character at the end of the opera represents death as an alien, inescapable fate. We can also thank Kierkegaard for his reinforcement of the Hegelian idea that, as we will see, the feeling of death is what brings about the “moral stage” of existence, a stage akin to the moral considerations with which

the Reason chapter concludes. Again referring to my earlier work on Pleasure and Necessity, I show how the punctual language of desire and satisfaction, iterated in the final musical notes of Mozart's opera, where Don Giovanni meets his fate, can also be heard in other repetitive, rhythmic beats within the *Phenomenology*, for example, in the "this," "here," "now," and "I" of Sense-certainty and later in the monosyllabic utterances of the guillotine's blade, in Hegel's chapter on the Terror, which we have yet to read.

What these contexts have in common, and what underlies their punctual, rhythmic (musical) realities, is the dialectic of immediacy whereby singularities fall, one by one, "under the blade" of the universal. In Hegel, as I think we know by now, this is always the destiny of the singular and, again dialectically, its best outcome, that by which it may attain a degree of spirituality (universality). What is essential to grasp, in the Pleasure and Necessity chapter, at least as I read it, is that the alien fate that seems to fall upon Don Giovanni, as a blind necessity inherent in the singular repetitiveness of his feelings of pleasure, is, in truth, not alien at all. The death that such a destiny seems to impose upon him as a natural and foreign necessity is, in truth, his own *qua singular*, as the arbitrary sum of his singular exploits.

It is the internalization of his "death" that will translate into the essential freedom that grounds the individual's moral search, in the conclusion of Reason, in the same way that the feeling of death was a necessary condition for the liberation of the slave, then internalized in the unhappy consciousness as a feeling of the Unchangeable. Here again, death (*qua natural necessity*) will become internalized as a feeling of moral perfection, felt by the worldly figures of morality in the following sections of Reason.

Re-reading Pleasure and Necessity in light of my present preoccupations with the onto-grammatical nature of judgment and its copula, I can add some new elements to this earlier analysis. First, and perhaps predictably, we can read the dialectical overcoming of singularity in terms of vanishing words, whose features I dare, at the risk of boring the reader, once again recall. The constant evanescent quality of our pronouncements is a quality of words, in general, and the possibility of their enfolding into more communal, spiritual structures of meaning. In engaging in dialogical activities, we are always engaging in interpretation and this involves an inherent ambiguity in words themselves, where their meaning is never completely exhausted in their forms. Further, again repeating myself, the openly hermeneutical activity of language is made possible through the speculative nature of the copula, where both identity and difference are at play.

Consequently, "here" and "now," taken as vanishing words and not merely as signs, may actually become meaningful. Comprehended speculatively, in the context of Hegel's Sense-certainty chapter, the words "here" and "now" can be comprehended as revealing the meaning of the "this," which denotes nothing more than the immediate singularity of signs. Similarly, the nauseating repetitive iterations of the guillotine's staccato fall, in the upcoming section on the Terror, taken as vanishing words (like "here" and "now"), can be read as the discursive meaning of political terrorism and its indifference to the singular individual. On

the same lines, the repetitive “notes” of the pleasure-seeking, reasoning individual’s satisfactions can be grasped as part of a greater “operatic” structure of meaning, one that involves the acknowledgment that the necessity that appears to befall the sybaritic individual as a heteronomous, natural destiny is really his own vanishing, his own death, and its own meaning.

Of course, in *Pleasure and Necessity*, we are dealing with particular individuality per se, whose obstinate “lunar” character can be found in the dogmatic, sophistical, hypocritical, and, yes, deeply human resistance to and denial of its most intimate destiny, that is, its finitude. Thus, in sexual satisfaction, the particular individual cannot desire the absolute annihilation and consumption of its object, for this would contradict “his” project of finding itself in “all reality,” upon which Reason is grounded. The sexual object can never be a mere object (as Sartre also shows) but, ideally, should be taken as an object/subject that also desires the *desiring* particular individual. In onto-grammatical terms, each subject seeks to predicate the *other*, taken initially as a body/sign, while at the same time offering itself as predicate/body/sign to that other as subject. It is precisely this speculative ambiguity that the pleasure-seeking individual seeks to do away with, to get over, to stop, and it is the impossibility of escaping such ambiguity that is expressed in the repetitive nature of desire and satisfaction.

Thus, the repetitive oscillatory nature of the pleasure/satisfaction experience is a feature of particular individuality in its orbital fixity. The individual seeks to predicate himself in the other in order to pronounce, once and for all, “I am.” But in saying so, he is always also saying “I am not,” for he can never *be* only what he says. The other, in whom he predicates himself, also has a say, but again, in saying so, discovers the same ambiguity. The happy union of mutual understanding, the perfect moment of happiness and satisfaction, when it occurs, is itself a singular *word*, a “here” and “now” that, as such, can never last.

Another important dimension of which I have now become aware, in light of my onto-grammatical reading of the *Phenomenology*, involves the copula and its relation to the different expressions of “law” that we have visited together, for example, in *Force and Understanding* and in *Observing Reason*, where laws appear as stand-ins for the speculative grasp of the copula, which has not yet been fulfilled with the particularity of content through the speculative interplay between identity and difference. Laws appear, in Hegel, when the copula has not been fully developed in the concept. As we have also seen, laws are the creatures of the understanding because the dogmatic judgments of *Verstand* are those that distinguish subject from predicate in a way that legislates their relation arbitrarily. In the context of *Pleasure and Necessity*, *necessity* should be read as an expression of what Hegel generally means by law, and is therefore revelatory of a certain reading of the copula as unfulfilled: here, as an empty, diaphanous medium, a lens that both brings closer and removes the truth that is sought, as we read in the *Phenomenology*’s Introduction (M74/W3, 69).

In *Pleasure and Necessity*, the insubstantial copula reflects the endless cycle of desire/satisfaction/desire/satisfaction that sexual relations, in the form of compulsive “don-juanism,” imply and the alternating current of ambiguity that

I described above. In sexual desire, the subject predicates the other as a body/sign but in doing so negates what it really desires, the subjectivity/freedom/desire of the other that is necessary in order that they may predicate *me* as sign/body. Again, Sartre describes this dialectic better than I (or Hegel!) could ever do, in the Concrete Relations with Others chapter of *Being and Nothingness*. For us, readers of Pleasure and Necessity, the copulative relation between subject and object is endlessly repetitive and experienced as a pure universality, a natural inevitability, an endless “petite mort” that is felt as death itself but is really the essential vanishing of the words “here” and “now,” both of which express nothing more than feeling, in its natural immediacy. The repetitive character of this immediacy is experienced as pure, blind, natural necessity, as law.

In the following sections, the feeling of law as a dead, natural necessity, an alien destiny, will become reflected, internalized, and thus mediated in the form of moral self-legislation. However, for this to happen, the understanding must further articulate and distinguish the poles between which “law” can show itself to be the ambiguous stand-in for the speculative copula.

The distinctions that Hegel draws between “good and bad” (M403/W3, 298), between “virtue and the way of the world,” between the “law of the heart” and the “violent ordering of the world” (M369/W3, 275) are meant to be resolved through (Kantian) moral legislation and its critical (Kantian) *testing* of the law. While this resolution fails, the futility (M432/W3, 319) of Reason’s final enterprise, whose achievement can never reach beyond a formless “ought” (M426/W3, 315), nonetheless has a deeper speculative meaning, for us. Indeed, as was the case in Force and Understanding and in Observing Reason, it is the very ambiguity of laws, the fact that they run from uttering to soliciting, from outer to inner, from being to essence, and so on, and equally the other way around, that allows us to grasp the true, speculative nature of the copula. Accordingly, the fluctuating ambiguity between subject and predicate that we witness in Pleasure and Necessity is the primitive presentation of their copulative truth. In truth, each pole is revealed as both subject and predicate, soul and body; that is, each pole is not merely a sign but a vanishing word. This truth will produce a new communal figure, as we saw arise at the end of the Unhappy Consciousness. Here, in Reason, we have the immediate presentation of ethical substance, in the form of the ancient Greek tribal community of shared custom, which I introduced above, and which will form the initial position of spirit in its self-certainty.

The danger, as always in the *Phenomenology*, is premature satisfaction, thoughtless repose in the arms of Circe, forgoing the efforts of mediation. This danger is real and present for a very simple and powerful reason: in the satisfaction of sexual union what is immediately intuited is the union between Subjectivity and Objectivity per se, the absolute certainty of being at home (*bei sich*) in otherness, the union of spirit and nature that characterizes nothing less than absolute knowing and the ecstatic foaming forth that ends the *Phenomenology*. We must remember, however, that such an outcome is absolutely satisfying because it is the result of earlier pleasures deferred or, in other terms, mediated, critically reflected upon, and thought through.

The Law of the Heart and the Frenzy (Madness) of Self-conceit

The necessity that struck the pleasure-seeking individual, in the last section, is experienced as an alien destiny, as the constantly repeating cycle of desire and satisfaction, which is felt as the mechanistic, inevitable cycle of life and death. Because the feeling of pleasure is thoroughly natural, that is, finite, fleeting, repeated, the individual cannot help but recognize in it his own natural destiny. Necessity is experienced as a law, one which first appears as imposed, a fact of nature but which is then experienced as intimately involved in individuality itself. Death is not just a theoretical proposition, a fact pertaining to living, natural things. Existentially, it is always already mine. As Heidegger might say, it is authentically my own possibility, as an existing individual. However, Hegel has not read Heidegger. Hegel arrives at his idea of death as the personal experience of natural necessity through the notion of feeling, which we have seen to be an essential component of modern individuality.

Once again, modernity is governed by Kantian understanding, which Hegel sees as bifurcated into fundamental expressions of feeling (intuition, skepticism) and ratiocinating judgment (dogmatism, empiricism). As one of the “universal presuppositions of the time,” as Hegel expressed it in his Preface to Hinrichs's *Philosophy of Religion*, modern feeling is meant to put us immediately in touch with the Truth, and the truth, here, is the universal law of life, its necessity, the inevitability of natural death.

However, once more referring to Kant, we see that such universality is a feature of reason's legislative function. It is thus not something theoretically inscribed, as such, in the rule of nature but rather something that the universalizing tendency of human reason posits there. Reason's legislative function is also, following Kant, the fundamental expression of my freedom, through reason's determination of the will. In this light, law, as a creature of reason, is something deeply personal, deeply felt. As a reasonable individual, I am the author of law, the free legislator of the law that informs me with its universality. As Hegel puts it here, “the new form [of individuality] is richer because its being-for-self [aka freedom] has for it the character of necessity and universality” (M367/W3, 275). Of course, reason's legislative vocation lays the groundwork for moral science, the law-making and law-testing that ends this chapter.

The crucial aspect of feeling, in the internalizing of the law of necessity, as well as in other aspects of the “Law of the Heart” and its worldly consequences, has many possible Enlightenment references, notably Rousseau. However, I would argue that there is no better way to understand the transition that Hegel is presenting in his chapter on Reason (from compulsive pleasure seeking, to necessity, to death, to universality, to law, to moral freedom) than existentially. This makes perfect sense because the subject under discussion is the modern individual who is seeking (and certain of) its place in the world.

It's an old story: the young man leaves home, indulges himself in every imaginable pleasure, as often as possible; one day, he wakes up realizing that all this is “getting old” and so is he; he decides to turn over a new leaf, to be good, get married,

have children, get involved, and thus moves from what Kierkegaard convincingly describes as the aesthetic stage to the moral stage of existence. Existentially, this move is not made because the individual has read Kant and Rousseau but rather because he is scared to death of dying. Of course, Kierkegaard's hard lesson is that salvation lies elsewhere but that's another matter. Still, my point is that perhaps the best reference to the whole Reason chapter is neither Kant nor Rousseau but the Danish existentialist.

Getting back to Hegel, the internalized law is now felt as the law of the heart, an inner purity, universality, a transcendence construed on the lines of the Unchanging which we witnessed in Unhappy Consciousness, opposed to contingent, worldly immanence. Such inner transcendence is a form that we have not left behind in our *Phenomenological* odyssey and which is now simply further developed, in terms of individuality and feeling. As with the earlier figure of the unhappy consciousness, transcendence is meaningless without something to transcend, something against which it must measure itself, an inauthenticity against which authenticity can assert itself, a necessity that offers resistance to its freedom. Here, in the law of the heart, Hegel's insight consists in showing that the "necessity" against which the heart's law measures itself is the same "alien necessity" (M369) that struck the individual in Pleasure and Necessity. This truth is only "for us" (*ibid.*), however. The existential individual feels that "the excellence of its own nature" (M370/W3, 276) stands oppressed by "a violent ordering of the world which contradicts the law of the heart" (M369). For us, wise Hegelian *Phenomenologists*, we already recognize that the pure heart, in positing its law against the law of the world, is really positing itself against itself. In other words, the individual must come to grasp the supposedly alien necessity of the world as its own law. This realization, however, does not come easily.

The problem is, once again, existential. The individual feels the law of the heart within him as a true essence and the whole problem is how to actualize this essence, to bring it into existence while conserving its essential purity. This will always be a problem, as Sartre teaches us, as long as we think of essence as something preceding existence, which is the case here. If we also take essence as the substance of freedom, then the problem becomes clearly moral or ethical: how can I express or act upon my perfect (Kantian) freedom without having that freedom traduced, bogged down, and perverted by the actuality (the world) in which it takes place? As Kant claimed, there has never been, and will never be, an action that is completely pure morally, nor, we can add, that is completely free. In succinct Hegelian terms: "Thus what emerges from the experience of this shape of self-consciousness as the True, contradicts what this consciousness is for itself" (M375/W3, 279).

When I act upon my moral purity, upon my law of the heart, and attempt to bring it into the world and to transform the world according to the purity of my heart, my intentions are perverted. At first, this appears to be the result of a worldly necessity, a world which is perverting. However, the purely intentioned individual comes to see that, since the world is the result of the activities and actions of all individual laws of the heart, each claiming "validity for his own individuality"

(M379/W3, 282), the inescapable conclusion is that it is particular individuality itself that is “perverted and perverting” (M377/W3, 280). In other words still, particular individuality is in contradiction with itself. It is the creature that harbors a universal purity in its heart, which only needs to be expressed in order to bring it into the world, but whose particular individuality, the vehicle through which universality is meant to be actualized, necessarily perverts its own universality, its essence, its freedom. Individuality is “perverted and the source of perversion” (M378).

The problem is thus individuality *per se* or, we might say, individualism, and this is what Hegel means to show in the Reason chapter: that the best the Enlightenment can do is produce the idea of the free individual, a notion that is deeply contradictory and limited, from the point of view of “humanity” (M377) or of a community of spirit. The laudatory idea of Reason, “the certainty of being all reality,” is limited by the agent of this certainty: the particular individual, the seat of theoretical (observing) reason, the author of moral action, and the legislator of moral law.

Let us now see what insights an onto-grammatical reading of the Law of the Heart section might afford. We will begin with an element that we have previously analyzed in this fashion: law. We have seen how law appears as a stand-in for more concrete (speculative) mediation. Law, which presents itself in terms of inner and outer, force and its utterance, psychological influence, and so on, configures the copula as the empty medium for its arbitrary, dogmatic judgments, where subject and predicate are linked in these terms. We have learned, however, that law is fundamentally ambiguous, since its mediation between subject and predicate can run either way. The truth of this ambiguity, as we have seen, is the speculative nature of the copula itself, that is, how it expresses both identity and difference, and is therefore open to hermeneutical interpretation.

The hermeneutical aspect, the openness to interpretation within onto-linguistic mediation (in the language-world that we partake in and of), gives onto social configurations, in Hegel's *Phenomenological* account. Most notably, we saw how the inverted world brought about the dialogical reality of self-consciousness. Here, in the law of the heart, ambiguity can be found in the fact that the “law” in question is reflected outwardly in the apparently opposed “law” of the world, which is, in fact, the result of all the other individual laws of the heart. As well, the law of the heart is itself the internalized result of the law of natural “necessity” that we encountered in Pleasure and Necessity.

In terms of judgment (proposition), the ambiguity within the flow of the copula means that the relation between individual particularity and universality is equally ambiguous. The law of the heart is, as law, essentially universal and good. Hence, individuality becomes the villain. But since the law of the heart arises within the individual, the law is necessarily perverted. This first contradiction thus takes place within the individual law of the heart as such, as a specific predication within itself between universality (the pure heart) and individuality, which I take to mean the body as *sign*. In configuring himself as a universal, the pure heart must predicate his individuality into a sign, a predicative act that breaks apart (*ur-teilt*) his

individuality into a state of what Hegel calls “derangement” or “insanity” (M376-7). The contradiction between the universal (subject) and the particular (predicate/body) is what is referred to, in this section, as “perversion” (*Verkehrung*, M376). The ambiguity of the copula means that the contradiction runs both ways. Because the body/sign/predicate is part of a whole world of bodies/signs/predicates, that world becomes, as a whole, a universal subject onto itself, one whose law reflects back on the pure heart, predicating it to be merely individual and thus bad.

The ambiguity in the copula, running both ways, where the logical terms of singular, particular and general/universal are easily interchangeable, is a feature of the judgment form itself. Indeed, the dizzying dance of the logical determinations around the copula is the content of the “Judgement” chapter in the *Logics*, although it is not my intention to deal with it here. For now, suffice to say that without the copula having developed into the middle term of particularity, thus involving identity, difference, and essential being, the subject and the predicate of judgment can only take on *either* singular, particular or universal content. “Iron (P) is a metal (U)” can also be expressed as “Iron (S) is a metal (P)”; “metal (S) is inorganic (U),” and so on. In the law of the heart, the heart presents itself as a universal, predicating the world as individuals, but who are really just other universal subjects (hearts) predicating their own body/signs. Thus, they themselves, and the world that they constitute, really form a universal state of individuality! If the reader is confused, then I can only say, “that’s the (ambiguous) point!” The confusion is furthered by Hegel’s apparently idiosyncratic use of both “singularity” (*Einzeln*) and individuality (*Individualität*) in the section and Miller’s translation of both as “individuality.”

Although particularity is not explicitly dealt with in the section, it is a constant, though occult, companion to individuality. I reiterate the difference between the singular and the individual: the singular refers to natural, undetermined signs. In spite of their recalcitrant natural character (slowly formed by use over time), their truth or meaning is their immediate vanishing into the thisness of the words “here” and “now,” as we saw in Sense-certainty. The individual (*Individuum*) is already a word. It has meaning; it is a singular sign that has been predicated with thought, meaning, or selfhood. Individuality is informed with particularity. In fact, as individual, it is a singularity that hangs onto its *particular* meaning in an attempt to deny its own essential vanishing, the condition for its uptake into greater syllogistic structures of meaning. Conversely, the particular individual seeks to preserve itself by attributing fixed properties to itself, in an exercise of dogmatic sophistry, as we witnessed first-hand in the Perception chapter. For the pure heart (U), individuality’s properties are all bad; “perverse,” “fanatical,” “gluttonous,” “degraded,” “oppressed,” “oppressing,” “perverse,” “perverting,” “deluded,” and so on are all fixed properties attached to individuality per se (M377).

The ambiguous logic of the copula, which we discovered through our reading of “law” as a stand-in for more substantial, speculative mediation between subject and predicate, enables us to understand what I take to be a crucial lesson in the section on the Law of the Heart and the Frenzy of Self-conceit: the perversion that the pure heart abhors in the world is simply the unmediated predication of the

perversion that the pure heart finds in itself. Consequently, without the developed speculative content of the copula, it is its own body/sign that the pure heart predicates as perverse *in its individuality*, an individuality, which, as a general feature of the world, reciprocally predicates the pure heart, *in its individuality*, as equally perverse. In more comprehensible terms, the pure heart's loathing of the world (because it is fraught with individualism) is really a self-loathing, and further, a loathing of its own body/sign. For in the absence of real, communal, dialogical reality, individuality goes unmediated and is never far removed from its status as a natural, singular body/sign.

On Hegel's reading, the religious fanatic, the bigot, the cult leader, the ultra-nationalist, the white supremacist, that is, all of those individuals obsessed with purity as a moral mission and bent on predicating some inner vision of "heart" into the world, and consequently infuriated (sometimes violently) by the world's recalcitrance to their mission, may be understood as morbidly beset by self-hatred. Such loathing, stemming from a feeling of inner purity, can be seen fundamentally as a hatred of one's own body as essentially perverse. It is the intimacy of such loathing that makes fanatical hatred so deep and powerful, and abhorrent. In claiming that (for Hegel) such fanaticism is a feature of a deficiency within the copula, I am recognizing the lack of speculative content there, which I have been presenting as the societal, dialogical reality stemming from hermeneutical openness. Fanaticism is the very opposite of such openness and its notion of purity shuns the differentiation that is the true heart of living (societal) identity.

I want to be clear about how this dynamic works in terms of the vanishing word. What the fanatically pure heart does in its predication of its bodily self and the world of signs is to try to set both in terms of their properties (gluttonous, selfish, individualist, fanatical, etc.). In doing so, its dogmatic judgments (propositions) configure the copula as an instrument or neutral medium supposedly relating, but in fact holding apart, subject and predicate. In this way, subjective judgments can assign an arbitrary number of predicates to any number of objects, which, as absolutely determinable, are empty linguistic signs. Consequently, by judging in this dogmatic fashion, the fanatical heart relegates his object/predicate (e.g., the world) to the status of natural signs/bodies.

I have tried to stress that the action of assigning or predicating properties is an attempt by the individual to preserve himself as subject, along with *his* world/object, from the vanishing inherent in acknowledging *both* as meaningful words. This preserving action "works," we might say, because the individual's unilateral predicative agency involves maintaining its predicate/objects as arbitrary signs, as natural entities with lasting permanence and refusing them the status of actual words ("actual souls"). However, the natural permanence of signs is exactly concomitant with their meaninglessness, their complete indeterminacy. Once again, vanishing is a condition of meaning. When the fanatical heart says, "the world is perverse"; "individuals are selfish"; "everyone is out for himself"; "the world is run by gluttonous despots and their minions" (M377), what he is really saying is the following: "This is the way the world is. Please God, don't let it change!

For then, I would no longer be able to judge it as such!" But the fanatic speaks in signs, not in words.

Since vanishing is a necessary condition for any historical narrative and since spirit is essentially historical (and societal), vanishing is a necessary condition of spirit. But first, Reason's individual has to get over itself and move on.

Virtue and the Way of the World

In this section, the ambiguity that we witnessed in the relation between universal matters and the actions of particular individuality, as that ambiguity was expressed in the law of the heart, becomes hardened and fixed in an element of relative sociality that Hegel calls "The Way of the World," and which is, in fact, nothing more than the cacophonous reality of the spiritual animal world that we will discover in the next section. Although the problem, here, is still individuality per se, we come to see that virtue's attempt to both lose its individual character and impose this lack of individuality on the world through its action is deeply contradictory and even, we can say, ironical. The reason is first the fact that action always involves an individual actor. The idea of somehow divesting oneself of one's individuality and then bringing about this self-sacrifice in the world through action is absurd since the author and agent of any such action must be ... individual. Second, the way of the world is nothing other than the actual sacrifice of all acting individualities, a sacrifice that they carry out in spite of themselves. To be an individual is to act in the world and, in so doing, to lose oneself in the constitution of it. The universality of the world is not something imposed through the visionary action of one particular individual but rather formed by the innumerable, real actions of individuals who, in their particular actions, dissolve themselves into the world.

I read the notion of sacrifice that Hegel introduces here (M383/W3, 285, M386/W3, 286) as an affirmation of what I have been calling "vanishing." Thus, when Hegel writes, "the conflict can only be an oscillation between preserving and sacrificing," I take him to mean an oscillation between signs and words. Indeed, there are explicit linguistic references in this section that I believe are best understood onto-grammatically. Briefly put, the triumph of the primitive (i.e., unmediated, communal) societal substance that is "the way of the world" (*Weltlauf*) happens because its language-world is more actual and meaningful than that of the individual knight of virtue. The *Weltlauf* is actually constituted by vanishing words, and the hermeneutical openness that they imply. The "way of the world" comes to light through the ambiguity that we witnessed in "law," in the previous section, which, as I have emphasized, Hegel uses as a stand-in for the speculative, dialogical copula.

Over against the verbal reality of the *Weltlauf*, constituted by the hermeneutical reality of vanishing words, the knight of virtue's pronouncements take place "in empty words" (M390/W3, 289), which I understand to be Hegel's way, here, of indicating pure linguistic signs. Put differently, the arbitrary pronouncements of the knight of virtue, his "empty rhetoric" (*ibid.*), are an effect of the unilateral nature that the copula adopts in his judgments, where the predicate can never be

more than a body/sign. This is why Hegel refers back to the Pleasure and Necessity section here, where the other's body/sign appeared only as something to be taken possession of through predication, in a futile attempt at consumption/negation. Consequently, the individual knight's unilateral pronouncements can never, *in themselves*, bring about the "spiritual substance" (M390) implied by the sociability of vanishing words, where the predicate has taken on a meaning of its own.

Since individuality appears to be the problem here, the knight seeks to make himself virtuous through *self-sacrifice*, which should be seen as an act of self-predication where the knight's predicate becomes his own body. The knight's self-sacrifice thus means suppressing his singular body in order to promote the universality of his mission. In doing so, he takes his body as a sign, as a natural thing ripe for predication, and the suppression of his body/sign means actually predicating it, investing it with the universality of thought, investing it with meaning. The problem is that such meaning must take the form of particular qualities, of the "gifts, capacities and powers" (M385/W3, 286) that Hegel refers to. Thus, the knight's self-sacrifice, when conceived of as self-predication, reveals itself to be a self-contradictory affirmation of his particular individuality and his enduring status as body/sign! Indeed, it is the very qualities that the knight self-predicates that fix his self in its corporeal individuality. He is a natural sign to which he has arbitrarily and unilaterally attached (his own) predicates.

The act of self-sacrifice can be looked upon as an enterprise in discursive ego-boosting (M390/W3, 289), "a puffing up which inflates him with a sense of importance in his own eyes and in the eyes of others, whereas he is, in fact, inflated with his own conceit" (*ibid.*). The knight of virtue reveals himself to be a knight of individuality. His virtuous self-sacrifice is a monstrous affirmation of selfhood wherein what he is really saying, both in his words and in his actual being, is this: "Am I not indeed virtuous, this naturally talented, gifted, capable individual who nonetheless chooses to sacrifice himself?" In fact, the best formula for understanding the knight of virtue is again through the empty judgment form of $I = I$, empty only because the copula is devoid of any differentiated content. Through his unilateral and exclusive act of predication, the knight is thereby excluding the otherness through which such content may become actual and meaningful. The vacuity of his discourse ensures that its determinant effect is that of "boredom" (M390).

Nonetheless, for us, Hegelian *Phenomenologists*, the knight's failure at self-sacrifice is deeply ironical or dialectical. Since his attempt to eradicate his individuality shows itself to be a supreme act of individuality, and since individuality is actually and performatively what constitutes the way of the world, the knight's fruitless act nonetheless participates in that world. Such a truth (for us) is only apparent, however, in light of the greater narrative, one which comprehends the world as made up by the very real participation of all sorts of individual acts in which we are all, to some degree, knights of virtue. As I observed above, the greater narrative (for us) reveals the truth of such participation: that individual actions are all instances of "self-sacrifice," and, understood this way, we see that they are all, indeed, vanishing words. The difference is that the knight of virtue, from the

perspective of his own self-predicating act of self-sacrifice, actually expresses the desire to hold onto himself and his individuality, to refuse his meaningful status as a vanishing word within a greater narrative structure. He does so by holding onto that which he claims to determine: his self as a lasting body/sign, constantly there as a vessel for the sophistical predication of his properties. As we first saw in the chapter on Perception, it is only through contractual ambiguity that the sophistical preservation of properties (and property) is broken down, where only in its surrender to another individual does property (and properties) actually mean something, that is, in its vanishing.

The contract, as we saw in the reference I made to the *Philosophy of Right* within the Perception chapter, is nothing more than the written instantiation, in real language, of the fact that to own something means to surrender it through exchange. Similarly, recognizing individuality as a word (and not just “my” sign) means opening its properties to the predication of otherness and thus to recognizing that meaning always escapes the individual. This is the “vanishing of the vanishing” (M409), which Hegel refers to, in the next section, as “objective reality” (M409/W3, 303). As I have hopefully shown, such reality is meaningful to the extent that it can be “read” linguistically.

Conversely, the language-world in which the knight of virtue expresses himself is unreal, undermined by a profound contradiction. It is a feature of both the “noble” sacrifice of his own individuality and the rejection of the way of the world as a forum that is thoroughly beset by individuality, and thus recalcitrant to his universal project. Hegel juxtaposes this specious language-world with one that is more substantial, through reference to ancient virtue (M390/W3, 289). For now, I simply want to stress that in juxtaposing the world of modern individuality with the ancient figure of worldly substance, Hegel is juxtaposing two language-worlds. The ancient world, which took place “in the spiritual substance of the nation,” with “a foundation full of meaning” (ibid.), stands opposed to the world of modern virtue’s “empty rhetoric,” where “empty words” lack “spiritual substance” (ibid.). Since we are dealing here with language-worlds, we can place them in the context of what Hegel refers to as spirit: worldly, historical configurations of humanity. As we will see, the figures of *spirit* that we find in the *Phenomenology* can be read as different language-worlds. However, first we must conclude our discussion on modern individuality and its attempts to find itself in “all reality.” Naturally, such a discussion of individuality cannot take place without depicting the modern world in which the individual finds itself. Such a world is one thus characterized by (modern) individuality.

Individuality That Is for Itself Real In-and-for-itself

This is the modern world. It is a world informed (and onto-grammatically performed) by particular individuals. As such, it is neither good nor bad or rather, in fact, it is both. We cannot say that the world is “bad” simply because particular individuals are selfish, animated only by personal desire. We cannot say

that the world is “good” because individuals seek to be virtuous within it. Pleasure and Necessity and the law of the heart have taught us that the modern world, as thoroughly informed by individuality, is neither a Hobbesian nor a Rousseau-inspired state of nature. It is made up of free individuals animated by both the desire for personal satisfaction and the will for the general good. The ambiguity between good and bad is a feature of action, in general, as Kant rightly noted: there has never been an absolutely good act. And, as we saw in the last section, individuality is nothing if it does not act, since its essence is to be self-positing. As a being of reason, individuality must seek to know itself in the world, having the intuition (certainty) that this being-in-the-world is its truth. Such self-knowledge in otherness is already an action through which the individual seeks to “find unity with himself” (M 404/W3, 299).

The section of Reason that we have read together (The Actualization of Rational Self-consciousness through Its Own Activity) is about the various meanings that are derived from individual action, whether through the immediate feeling of sexual union or in the existential challenges involved in maintaining individual authenticity (heart and virtue) when faced with an inimical world. Virtue and the Way of the World has shown us that, in terms of the grand narrative, the modern individual acts in the world whether they like it or not, that chivalrous resistance is already an involvement, and that even a noble refusal to “get involved” is a form of getting involved. If, as individuals, we are indeed meaning-secreting beings, it is because our involvement is always a form of self-sacrifice or self-loss, a vanishing whose sense informs the world that we act in, *and its history*. As such, as meaningful, the world should be conceived as a “vanishing of the vanishing” (M409), the actualization of individualities, taken not as signs but as words.

What is preserved is not the vanishing: the vanishing is itself actual and bound up with the work and vanishes with it... The vanishing of the vanishing lies in the concept of the intrinsically real individuality itself; for that in which the work vanishes or what vanishes in the work [...] is objective reality. (M408-9)

Once again, however, this truth is for us, Hegelian *Phenomenologists*, and not recognized by the modern individual per se. The individual, in her actions, remains caught up in the dilemma between the individuality of her intentions and the generality in which her action vanishes, an “existential” dilemma, as I wrote above, inherent in the notion of individual action itself. At a fundamental level, I mean to determine my action freely, but as action, it is “worldly” and thus tied into natural determinacy, causality, and heteronomy. My transcendence (essence, freedom, authenticity) is necessarily “deceived” by the immanence that the very notion of action implies.

In order to get around this dilemma, I, as the modern individual, introduce various distinctions: I analyze my action, breaking it down into oppositions like ends and means or good and bad (M403/W3, 298) or doing and being. All of these distinctions are essentially modern, not only because they are inextricably involved in individuality but because they carry out the logic of the Kantian *Verstand* and

its fundamental oppositions (between the in-itself and discursive knowledge; between nature and freedom; between intuition and judgment; between the theoretical and the practical). Similarly, in order to get around the fundamental dilemma involved in action (between my freedom and worldly necessity) I might distinguish my motivation or purpose in terms of a loftier *Sache selbst* (essential matter), as opposed to acting for a certain material thing (*Ding*) (M410/W3, 304). The *Sache selbst* is meant to bring about the instantiation into reality of something universal, of greater concern, through action. However, even acting for the purpose of greater matters involves a contradiction because such greater matters (*Sachen*) are either necessarily shared and therefore not really mine or are mine and therefore not shared for the greater good.

These oppositions, at play in every aspect of individual action, and indeed, in every aspect of individuality per se, form, once again, “the universal presuppositions of our time,” that is, the modern contradiction between Truth as an essential Beyond and our individual finitude, against a background of skepticism. The contradiction ultimately rests upon a perverse (Kantian) notion of judgment, where the predicate is arbitrarily and unilaterally assigned by the subject through a copula that is construed as no more than a neutral link, and which, rather than bringing subject and predicate together, holds them apart.

Acknowledging that the truth of the individual is in its vanishing means truth is not *beyond* but actually takes place in the interplay between subject and predicate. In the speculative copula, essence comes to exist (as the identity of identity and difference), although necessarily in time and only for a time. As we have seen, it is in the very nature of the individual to resist such vanishing, to hold on to his particular individuality, even though the very act of “holding” involves self-loss, that is, his dispersal into a bad infinity of general properties.

The Spiritual Animal Kingdom

In the Spiritual Animal Kingdom (M397/W3, 294), the individual’s resistance to his own vanishing comes to take the form of the *Sache selbst*, which Miller translates as the “matter in hand” but which might be better understood simply as “the essential matter” or “what’s at stake” or even as “my thing,” in the “hip” 1970s context of that expression. For I do think that the *selbst* in Hegel’s expression is an ironic *double-entendre* on the arbitrary “selfness” of the supposedly universal concern that is assigned to the action. When an individual acts, they do so for what’s “at stake” but what is at stake is so *for the individual*. Hegel wants to show us that what is truly at stake involves our vanishing, through which our stakes become meaningful and spiritual, that is, first of all communal or societal and then, by extension, historical.

At first, the individual presents “what’s at stake” as something other than himself but that he owns, as a predicate that belongs to him, that is “his thing,” as we might say, for example, “The environment is my thing”; “Healthcare is my thing”; “Culture is my thing”; “Contributing to the economy is my thing.” In other words, the *Sache selbst* becomes my property, a predicate/sign that I seek to establish as

permanent and which reciprocally ensures my own permanence as an individual. In terms of language, the spiritual animal kingdom is therefore a cacophony of voices, where each individual expresses herself through their predicative action. It is a free market of opinion, a world where everyone has something to say but no one listens. We might think of it in terms of today's "Twitterverse."

The spiritual animal kingdom presents a Hobbesian state of nature but taken as a spiritual form, meaning, for Hegel, a humanly shared historical moment: "now" as present, individuality-inflected modernity. In fact, as we saw in Sense-certainty and its own version of the "animal kingdom," the "now," is always *new*, and indeed, endlessly reiterated newness is also a general feature of the spiritual animal kingdom, readily apparent in its eschewal of its own historicity. For the modern individual, his expressions are meant to be significant because, above all, they are simply here, now and new. To be a "has been" is to be nothing at all. But "having been" is the very essence of meaning, in Hegel. As a critique of modern individuality, Hegel's Reason chapter portrays us (modern individuals) as vainly (in both senses) anhistorical creatures, anchoring ourselves in the ever-present through our actions and works. Behind our backs, it is the very vanishing of our works (and words), their "having been," that lends them any meaning at all.

The above references to Sense-certainty should help us recognize a similar nominalistic materialism, which we discovered there through reference to Hobbes, again in the Spiritual Animal Kingdom of Reason. Recall that in that primitive, Hobbesian figure, consciousness found itself in a world of natural, meaningless signs, ripe for predication. Here, in the present context, we arrive at (or regress to) such a world through the individual's persistent recalcitrance to vanishing, through his self-ish assignment of universal concerns to his own actions, and to the self-understanding of his own actions as always new and thus valuable. The endlessly reiterated newness of the individual's "works" also reminds us of the pleasure-seeking individual's attempts at self-recognition in the "now" of sexual pleasure. Of course, as we know by now, such "action," such "works" are forms of predication, ones which, in seeking self-preservation, refuse to acknowledge their vanishing status as words and consequently, refuse any reciprocal agency within the predicate itself. The latter remains a dead sign, ripe for subjective predication, a body divorced from its soul.

The outcome of the Spiritual Animal Kingdom section moves beyond such unilateral predication. For then, writes Hegel, "what's at stake [*die Sache selbst*] no longer has the character of a predicate, and loses the characteristic of lifeless abstract generality" (*Allgemeinheit*, M418/W3, 310). The "lifeless abstract generality" refers to the predicate's status as an empty linguistic sign, infinitely determinable. Hegel continues, "[the *Sache selbst* qua predicate] is [now] rather substance permeated by individuality, [i.e.] *subject* in which there is individuality" (*ibid.*, my emphasis). This new state of affairs does not merely occur on the level of individual self-consciousness but forms the "reality of all" (M418). The transition to the communal or societal level of the "spiritual" takes place because the predicate is no longer a pure determinable object/sign but is now conceived as a *Subjekt* (*ibid.*) whose own predicative vanishing participates in the speculative,

hermeneutical ambiguity within the copula. This speculative ambiguity is, as I have been arguing, a necessary condition for communal or societal expressions and their history. Of course, this truth, this “reality for all” is not there for the modern rational individual himself but rather is available retrospectively, for us, through our own historical view of what has been.

The fact that Hegel’s “animal kingdom,” in the Reason chapter, is “spiritual” (*geistliche*) is significant in that it is clearly presenting a figure that reaches beyond the scope of Reason, into the next chapter (Spirit). If Reason presents the figure of modern, Enlightenment-inspired individuality, then the spiritual aspect of the present section refers to the communal, historical moment where such individuality constitutes a world, and, as such, a moment in human history. In the Reason chapter, Hegel has deduced this moment logically or rather onto-grammatically. He began with the introduction of modern individuality in self-consciousness and then let this creature loose in the world or, rather, against the world in which it sought to recognize (know) itself.

The deduction is similar to the one Hobbes carries out in the *Leviathan*: first we define the individual, then we put him together with other similar individuals in order to see what a state of nature would look like. Both Hobbes and Hegel arrive at a type of “animal kingdom” of individuality. In neither case is the deduction itself historical, temporal. However, in Hegel, because the world of individualism is “spiritual,” it must be comprehended as taking place within the world and its temporality. This is what allows such a world to be re-presented in the Spirit chapter, where the same late-Enlightenment moment will *then* be deduced historically, in the Culture section. The fact that both the onto-grammatical and historical deductions arrive at the same conclusion means that the Spirit chapter will end with the same world-figure with which Reason ends: the world of modern individualism. In Reason, this moment takes the final Kantian figure of legislative and critical reason. Likewise, in Spirit, we end with (Kantian) morality and, I believe, with a similarly disputatious “animal kingdom” moment of confession and pardon. Indeed, Hegel can go no farther in his account of human spiritual history than the “animal kingdom” of modern individualism because that is the world in which he sees himself *actually* living. If something (speculative) is missing in the narrative, it will have to be supplied through Chapters 7 and 8, in Religion and Absolute Knowing. In our terms, the spiritual animal kingdom of late-Enlightenment, modern individualism, must be shown to be a vanishing language-world. It must come to be seen as *having been*. Such an outcome can take place only in light of a larger, speculative narrative, the one that Hegel calls Science and which is the outcome of the *Phenomenology*.

For us, Hegelian *Phenomenologists*, Science implies looking back at ourselves and our present world as something finished, as something that has been. Such a look is sometimes difficult, because we are, of course, immersed in the present, modern world. However, critical self-regard is exactly what philosophy entails, and always has. And, if we are attentive, it is fairly easy for us to recognize Hegel’s “spiritual animal kingdom” in our own contemporary world, a world that Hegel commentators have interpreted in many clever ways, including ascribing it to

academia! Beyond possible reference to academe, the linguistic aspect that I have been stressing is readily recognizable in much of our contemporary online activity, and in the overtly anti-social character of activity within "social" media. Indeed, online linguistic activity often resembles a state of nature, where, to employ Hobbes' expression, people use words "to grieve each other," as animals do with beaks and claws.

As philosophers, it is tempting to sit back and criticize this online world, so rife with ad hominem attacks and other fallacies of every imaginable kind, so persistently and pervasively sophistical! Briefly put, as philosophers, it is tempting to see our contemporary language-world as one of inauthentic "idle talk" (Heidegger) or "chatter" (Kierkegaard). However, it is important to recall that both these existentialist philosophers consider "inauthentic" language as an inescapable feature of modern life, a background of noise in which we participate whether we intend to or not, and which forms the horizon of our *individual* existence. And most importantly, it is *only* against this noisy backdrop that we may discover and assert our own, individual, essentially silent, authenticity. The deep pertinence of Hegel's critique of modern individualism, in the Reason chapter, consists in showing that the very idea of individual authenticity cannot form an end in itself but rather remains a collateral feature that arises against the background that he calls the "spiritual animal kingdom." In fact, the notion of individual authenticity is inseparable from the discursive chatter, the idle talk that characterizes the modern world. This world is, in fact, constituted by the individual search for something like authenticity. To see this, we merely need to translate the term into Hegel's concepts of "heart" or "virtue."

Finally, I return to what is certainly, for Hegel, the most essential characteristic of the modern world and the notion of individuality that constitutes it: the duality (duplicity) of the (Kantian) understanding (*Verstand*). To live in a world of *Verstand* means living according to two principal elements: intuition/feeling and dogmatic judging (along with skepticism regarding grand narratives). Put briefly, the spiritual animal kingdom's chatter is an expression of dogmatic judging. Individual authenticity ("virtue," "heart") is an expression of feeling. Hegel shows us that both apparently opposed elements are essential features of modern individualism. As an individual, however, I cannot conscience the disappearance of the spiritual animal kingdom because it is the only world in which I can express *myself*, even if no one is really listening.

Reason as Law-giver and Law-tester

The last two sections of Reason offer particular interpretive challenges. As I have mentioned previously, the moral or ethical bent, in "Reason as Lawgiver" and "Reason Testing Laws," fits with the general theme of German Enlightenment reason and how it, through Kant's First and Second *Critiques*, is shown to have a moral vocation. So, we might simply say that the move beyond Reason to Spirit reflects Hegel's speculative mission to overcome the distinction between theoretical and moral thought. The problem is that in the two sections under discussion, it is

very hard to find any reference to morality as it is presented in Kant's *Critiques*. Indeed, Hegel's discussion of moral laws as "masses" that are generalizations of particular matters at hand (*Sachen*) and his reference to universally accepted commandments are hard to square with Kant's notion of morality as free self-legislation through reason's unconditioned causality.

In fact, while indeed Hegel's chapter on Reason does end with moral considerations, and while the reference is to Kant, I believe that in the two final sections, Hegel is not referring to the critical project but rather to another Kant text altogether: his 1786 essay, "What Does It Mean to Orientate Oneself in Thinking?"

Significantly, the vital purpose of the essay is to reconcile the fundamental opposition that Hegel finds in the Kantian consciousness of *Verstand* and which he sees as characterizing the modern late-Enlightenment world generally: intuition/feeling versus dogmatic reasoning. Kant's essay attempts to address the same opposition, and to reconcile, rather than arbitrate, the two poles as they are expressed in the epochal *Pantheismusstreit* (Pantheism Quarrel) between the popular philosophers, Moses Mendelssohn and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. The aim of Hegel's final sections of Reason is to show that Kant's attempt at reconciliation, in his essay, is not sufficient, and that the Enlightenment opposition between faith and reason can be resolved only speculatively (i.e., by seeing how they are both identical and different). For Hegel, such a reconciliation involves the incorporation of the Enlightenment opposition into spirit and its temporality. In other words, we must come to see the opposition between faith and reason as a historical moment that *has been* and whose significance is seen as part of a greater narrative. "Faith" and "reason" must not form fixed positions, as signs that are waved about like flags or banners in order to inspire their respective legions of followers, but rather vanishing words whose meaning has spilled out beyond them.

Before returning to Kant's "Orienting" essay as an exegetical key to the last two sections of Reason, I want to look at them from the linguistic point of view that we have been taking, in terms of the different copulative relations that we have discovered between subject and predicate. At this level, it is notable that, once again, references to figures of *law* precede new, more socially concrete figures. Here, reference to moral laws foreshadows the sociality of spirit itself, in Chapter 6.

What these legislative references have in common, as we saw, is a characteristic ambiguity in the formal propositions that articulate law. This ambiguity is at play in the copula itself, between subject and predicate, where each may just as easily express the singular (*Einzel*), the particular (*Besondere*), or the general/universal (*Allgemein*). In all cases, the logic of *judgment* means that there are only two of the three syllogistic terms at play in articulations of law. In all cases, what is missing is the content-ful mediation, for example, when the moment of particularity mediates between the singular and the universal, in the principal Hegelian syllogism (aka the *Begriff* or concept). That is why I have presented Hegelian "law" in terms of a stand-in for mediation.

Nonetheless, the ambiguity of law is dialectically rich, forming a hermeneutical opening through which communal and societal figures appear. Here, in the dying moments of Reason, the ambiguity is expressed by the word "ought" (*Sollen*), which

articulates the essence of moral law (cf. Kant) and which, for Hegel, expresses legislative ambiguity itself. In other words, in moral law, the “ought” takes the place of the copula and demonstrates once again how the notion of law is essentially self-contradictory. Specifically, the “ought,” which stands in for the copula in moral law, says both what *is* and what *is not*. It is a universal statement that acknowledges its own arbitrariness. Everyone ought to tell the truth, legislates both the real truth of truth-telling per se, while also stating that such truth-telling is not actually present. Thus, in moral law, the “propositional form” (*Form eines Satzes*, M424/W3, 313) is inherently contradictory. The universality of its legislative form, for example, “One ought to do good,” is always in ambiguous relation with its arbitrary content.

The above-mentioned syllogistic aspects, where laws are seen as lacking in mediating content and therefore open to ambiguity, are apparent in the final sections of Reason that I am discussing, notably in the reintroduction of the term *Einzeln* as distinct from *Individuum*, a fact once again obscured by Miller's translation of both as “individual.” To repeat: Hegel tends to use “singular” when the context is syllogistic, that is, when the singular is precariously related to the universal or the general. He tends to use “individual” when singularity is fixed in association with particularity, that is, with the properties with which the singular seeks to maintain itself and prevent its dissolution or collapse into the universal. The vanishing word is a *carried-out* form of individuality, one that has surrendered its properties or rather revealed that they are only significant to the extent that they are themselves essential generalities *for others* and not only “mine.” That is why Hegel's example of a moral law to be tested is so significant: private *property* is presented as an absolute right or law (M430/W3, 317). Demonstrating the ambiguity (between singularity and universality) in such a law, Hegel writes:

The single thing that is my property is held as much to be something general, solidly established and permanent. But this contradicts its nature, which consists in its being used and in *vanishing* (M431). ... That law-giving and law-testing have proved to be futile, means that both, when taken singly and in isolation, are merely unstable moments of the ethical consciousness. (M432/W3, 319)

Such “vanishing” and “instability” must be seen for what they are: expressions of ambiguity that form primitive social instantiations of ethical belief, immediate cultural beliefs, actualized in a historical moment that is conscious of itself. I say “primitive” because such ethical “masses,” as Hegel refers to them in the Reason sections on moral law, are immediate, even tribal forms of unreflected, shared belief. As we will see, the first actualized form of such language, in Spirit, will take place in the vanishing words of Greek tragedy, in *Antigone*, where what is questioned, what is now open to interpretation, is nothing other than the notion of law itself.

At the beginning of this section, I mentioned a hidden reference that is key to understanding Reason's law-making and law-testing activities: Kant's essay “What Does It Mean to Orientate Oneself in Thinking?” where he arbitrates between Mendelssohn and Jacobi in their epochal Pantheism Quarrel. Further below, in

my discussion of the late-Enlightenment in the Spirit chapter, I will present a more detailed account of this Kant essay and how important it is to understanding Hegel's grasp of the *Aufklärung* and what is at stake in its contradictions. Here, in the present context, suffice it to say that the stakes that the essay addresses cannot be higher. This is because Hegel (as does Kant) sees the Quarrel between faith and reason as reflecting a pernicious division not only in theoretical philosophy's approach to knowledge but within modern culture itself. More specifically, Hegel (like Kant) sees the rupture between faith and reason, as articulated in the well-followed epistolary Quarrel, as pernicious to the greatest gift offered to humanity by the Enlightenment: freedom, not just as a philosophical notion but as actual, political freedom.

Here, in Reason's presentation of Enlightenment thought, we have seen how Hegel conceives of it as fundamentally riven by the opposition between intuition/feeling and dogmatic reasoning. As we have also seen, this opposition, which is another iteration of the one that characterizes the *Pantheismusstreit*, is conceived by Hegel as reflective of Kantian *Verstand*. Thus, the Reason chapter presents a world that is not yet defined by *Vernunft*, by reason in the Kantian sense (i.e., the faculty of freedom and the unconditioned) but rather by the understanding, as the thoroughly conditioned faculty of knowledge that is divided between the pure forms of intuition and the judging, discursive categories. The last two sections of the *Phenomenology's* Reason chapter that deal with law-making should therefore not be read as promoting the legislative activity of Kantian reason, where the will is unconditionally and freely determined by *Vernunft* in order to produce moral law, but rather as articulating the inflexible, determinant aspect of law-making, one that is aligned with the hard, *lunar* heteronomy that Hegel associates with the understanding, that is, the type of judgments that Kant describes as "determinant," where the singular *falls under* the general.

In the last two sections of Reason, this heteronomous legislative function of the understanding produces the "masses" that I presented above as instantiations of "tribal" communities of shared belief, immediate configurations of "ethical substance" (M421, M437/W3, 312, 321). The "Orientating" essay helps us see that what these masses represent is, in fact, mere common sense, a creature of the understanding, and not reason (*Vernunft*) at all, in either the Kantian or Hegelian sense. The last two sections, on law-making and testing, want to show that such common sense is akin to the immediate social ethics of custom with which Spirit will begin. Thus, "These laws or masses of the ethical substance are immediately acknowledged. We cannot ask for their origin and justification" (M421). In the same way, the ancient laws of the gods, referred to at the end of Reason, simply "are" (M437).

The "masses" that Hegel refers to are the immediate, supposedly universal commandments, like "Love your neighbor as you would love yourself"; "It is never good to lie"; "Property is an absolute right." What Hegel wants to show is that all these commandments are culturally specific, customary, immediate, and thus arbitrary moral tenets. They are thoroughly conditioned, dogmatic pronouncements of the understanding that simply iterate "what is," as expressions

of common sense; they are the dictates of “sound reasoning.” Indeed, as support for my argument regarding Hegel’s reference to the “Orienting” essay, we note that Hegel uses the same, rather idiosyncratic, expression that we find in Kant’s essay: “sound reason” (*gesunde Vernunft* M422, 423, 424). The more common term is *gesunde Menschenverstand*. In the “Orienting” essay, *gesunde Vernunft* is how Kant refers to Moses Mendelssohn’s idea that common sense is a necessary guiding principle for reason, one that must temper its “speculative” (here, dogmatic metaphysical) tendency in order to know anything at all, and, above all, to know the objects of metaphysics. What Kant wants to show, in the essay, is that it is not actually “common sense” per se that guides reason but rather reason’s own moral vocation, its vocation for *freedom*, that “orientates” it beyond knowledge.

However, what Hegel retains from Kant’s essay is the idea that the generally accepted “laws,” tenets, or moral commandments, which appear as self-evident to any “reasonable” being, are really only expressions of common sense, in the Mendelssohnian sense, and, as such, are actually the pronouncements of the *Menschen-Verstand*. As an expression of common sense, the Enlightenment idea of moral “reason” thus falls back into the dualistic grammatical ontology of *Verstand*, a feature of the modern world. As we have seen, one essential aspect of this world is the fundamental Kantian/Fichtean distinction between theoretical knowledge and morality, a distinction that, for Hegel, only replays the *Verstand*’s opposition between dogmatic knowledge and unconditioned inner feeling.

The “tautology” by which law-making reason comes up with its universal laws is the projection of empty universality per se (M427/W3, 316). In other words, moral common sense, in its universal commandments, is simply saying, “ought” and nothing more. According to our reading, therefore, when Hegel asserts that such moral “propositions” have no real content (*ibid.*), he is saying that the copula is empty. As we saw above, the “ought” stands in for the speculative copula, that is, the existing “is” as the ambiguous expression of identity and difference, which arises in the dialogical interplay between subject and predicate. Here, however, the “ought” represents an expression of moral law itself, and thus as a stand-in for true content. Although the moral law, in its ambiguity, is dialogical without knowing it, it appears as a blind, tautological expression of $I = I$, where the copula has not yet been recognized as speculative. Consequently, the moral proposition of sound reasoning says something like, “I ought” or even, “I ought to ought,” without involving any real content.

In testing the laws, reason claims to critically, even meta-ethically, examine the commandments of common sense according to their legislative form. In this sense, meta-ethics, in its testing, seeks a criterion or a “standard for deciding whether a content is capable of being a law or not, i.e. whether it is or is not self-contradictory” (M428/W3, 416). However, since the commandments are themselves tautological expressions of $I = I$, where the copula is the empty “ought,” the consciousness that is critically examining the “masses” or common-sense laws is, once again, really only pronouncing *itself*. In critically judging moral tenets according to whether they are “contradictory” (M437/W3, 321), I am reducing them to the same empty tautology that they are expressing. I judge them according

to myself, according to my own self-consciousness and my own will (the practical form of my consciousness). Nonetheless, it is essential to grasp the importance of such testing. If the “masses” of common-sense moral commandments that we live by are really immediate customs of our ethical world, that is, the societal configuration arising from the dialogical ambiguity within law itself, then the “testing” that self-consciousness imposes on such immediate custom must also participate in the form of spirit that we will begin with in the next chapter.

As soon as I start to test [the laws] I have already begun to tread an unethical path [...] I am within the ethical substance and this substance is thus the essence of self-consciousness. But this self-consciousness is the actuality and existence of the substance, its self and its will. (M437)

The complicity between the dialectical aspect of self-consciousness (the critical negativity in “testing”) and the ethical substance is clearly expressed in the above citation. Even in the immediacy of such a spiritual community, the seeds of ambiguous mediating difference are already at play.

Onto-grammatically, in reason’s giving and testing moral laws, the relation between the subject and the predicate is incipiently speculative and dialogical, since the ethically substantial predicate (the ethical substance) has now been invested or predicated with self-conscious “actuality and existence.” The speculative outcome is possible only because the hard, unilateral opposition between the particular individual and “his” moral laws has “vanished” (M435/W3, 320). The result is a form of spirit that is “actual, full-filled and self-conscious” (ibid.). The speculative interplay between subject and predicate now brings about forms of language that are communal/societal and historical (vanishing). The first of these forms takes place in the language of Greek tragedy, where the immediate ethical substance puts itself to the test and, in doing so, is undermined by the very self-consciousness that makes it “actual.” The actual language of this figure of spirit is performed in the shared, literary, and hermeneutically open form of Sophocles’s play *Antigone*.

Chapter 6

SPIRIT: THE HUMAN STORY

The Ethical Order (M 438/W3, 328)

I have stressed the role of vanishing words in the constitution of spirit. I have also emphasized the hermeneutical openness involved in vanishing words and the speculative nature that this implies in the copula, the verb “to be” that joins the onto-grammatical subject and the predicate. The vanishing of words means that their hard, recalcitrant nature as signs ripe for arbitrary signification is overcome. When signs become words, their meaning always spills out of them and presents itself for interpretation to others. When the predicate becomes a vanishing word and not merely an arbitrary, immediate, and thus natural (in Hegel’s sense) sign, then we can say that it takes on a discursive life of its own. I have presented the copulative interplay between predicate and subject as dialogical. We have seen how the different expressions of law in the *Phenomenology*, all of which articulate the essential ambiguity in the copula, herald communal/figures that are the instantiations of this ambiguity, of the dialogical interplay and the interpretive openness in the copula. In Hegelian terms, the copula becomes full-filled (*erfüllt*), taking on real content, where the verb “to be” expresses real be-ing. From the point of view of vanishing words, then, spirit is essentially communal/social and dialogical.

I have also emphasized the temporal nature of vanishing words, the fact that the essential finitude of words, that they are always in time only for a time, allows us to see their spiritual incarnation as historical. “Historical,” in the Hegelian sense, does not just mean “in the past.” It means being articulated in the grammatical present perfect, in the tense or time of “having been,” part of the past (participle) but experientially possessed (in the auxiliary verb “to have”) in the present. “History” also implies a narrative progression, where meanings always spill out beyond the words that they inhabit, into greater, more meaningful, narrative forms.

Putting all of this together, we can say that the Spirit chapter can be explored in linguistic, dialogical, and therefore communal/societal forms that *have been*, that is, that are part of the past but also “possessed” as part of our present experience as *Phenomenological* scientists. For us, the essential hermeneutical openness of these forms means that their meanings are never fixed and established but remain invitingly open to interpretation, within a community of shared reference, that

is, shared within the general linguistic framework of propositional grammar: subject, predicate, and copula.

In the previous chapters of this book, we have looked at different relations between subject and predicate as they pertained to consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason. The linguistic forms presented in Spirit are nothing new; we have already encountered them all. The difference now is that these forms, as spiritual, must have real content. Because spirit is constituted of vanishing words, in the sense that I just summarized, we can expect the onto-grammatical nature of the copula to involve actual shared, societal language. In other words still, the copula, in Spirit, presents language that really "is." The tragedy *Antigone* is a paradigmatic example of the vanishing words that make up the content of Spirit. The tragedy is essentially language; it has been; it is communal/societal; it is endlessly open to interpretation. Its words are always vanishing, to the extent that their meanings constantly outstrip the linguistic signs (in Greek, German, English, French, etc.) in which the meanings are embodied, at least for a time. As we move through the chapters of Spirit, we will discover other instances of spiritual language.

We have seen how the copula represents the theater where the dialectic between identity and difference plays out. The speculative truth of the copula and the judgment form generally arise when the copula expresses neither the absolute identity between subject and predicate nor their absolute difference but when both are mutually involved in a hermeneutically fruitful relationship. In order to make these Hegelian logical moves more understandable, more real, and onto-logical, allow me to repeat an example that I present to my students.

If I say that "I am a man because I am a man," then I am expressing my self-identity as just that, as self-identity. I am what I am. $I = I$. If I say that "I am a man because I am not a woman," then I am expressing my self-identity in terms of pure difference. I exclude what I am not and am left with what I am. However, the speculative truth involves both identity and difference: by determining myself with reference to "woman," I am admitting "womanhood" into my true identity. Without the differentiating concept of "woman," I would not have the *true* identity of "man." Without *her* difference, I would not be who I am in my self-identity. So, both identity and difference make up my speculative (true) identity. Not only that, but my true speculative identity is ontologically actual. I really "am" through the interplay between "man" and "woman." In fact, if we take speculative truth as the interplay between identity and difference, the above example allows for an infinite variety of actually existing, infinitely interpretive gender identities between the binary poles of man and woman.

The above example is not fortuitous in the present *Phenomenological* context, because Hegel presents tragedy in terms of man and woman (M446). Consequently, my classroom example allows us to see what is really at stake in tragedy: the question of identity and difference, a question that is played out in the copula. Although, in Spirit, the copula is already speculative (communal and historical), involving *both* identity and difference, their relation is far from an easy or settled one! In fact, the dynamic, dialogical relation between identity and difference in the copula is what produces the lively, ontological, and hermeneutically open

diversity of meaning between subject and predicate, a diversity that underlies the complexity of “our” world and its history, making it (and us) both meaningful and endlessly open to interpretation.

Sophocles’ *Antigone* is the perfect Hegelian choice, the emblematic Greek tragedy, because it presents identity and difference in real language. Their real, performative interplay is the meaningful societal reality of the Greek polis. In *Antigone*, man and woman are absolutely opposed, in the hard, binary fashion that I began with, in the classroom example above. The opposition between identity and difference is actually instantiated and fixed in the obdurate notion of law, in opposing laws: on one hand, man’s law, that is, the human law of reason and state; on the other, woman’s law, that is, the divine law of hearth, family, and custom. The problem with tragedy, generally, is that the conflict ends tragically! There is never a “happy ending” where the two poles are reconciled. In *Antigone* each antagonist, Antigone and Creon, only understands identity as exclusive of difference. The law is what it is, because it is not otherwise. Of course, as we have seen in every account of it in the *Phenomenology*, law never is simply what it is; it is always also what it is not; it is essentially ambiguous. But neither Antigone nor Creon sees this speculative truth: the fact that their unilateral judgments of exclusive identity are actually pronouncements of absolute difference. Instead, in the tragedy, we are presented with a dilemma. *Either* we obey the law of man (the state) *or* the law of women (the hearth). In fact, their mutually exclusive difference, as unreconciled, can be expressed only in the language of tragedy, whose outcome, as we will see, is ultimately to collapse into the in-difference of Roman comedy.

It is important to note that this historical outcome is possible only because, in tragedy, the real copulative interplay between identity and difference takes place in *Spirit*, even though that interplay takes the form of a dilemma. As formative of spirit, tragedy is real, actual, societal, and historical because of its *onto*-grammatical nature, that is, its status as actual, performative language. In other words, it is the real and performed language of Sophocles’ tragedy that informs the Athenian ethical substance in which it is pronounced. That ethical substance is thus one where identity and difference are initially presented as mutually exclusive and thus devoid of speculative mediation.

Hegel’s choice of work, in this section of the Spirit chapter, is based on the fact that Sophocles’ work introduces primitive, binary political difference into the undifferentiated social unity that Hegel refers to, in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* (W12, 293, 295–335) as the “beautiful individuality,” a unity that characterizes not only the symmetrical beauty of Greek sculpture and architecture, but, more significantly, the unitary character of the community itself. This figure of undifferentiated community, of tribal identity has appeared previously, in our reading of the *Phenomenology*, notably in the social configurations that immediately follow the ambiguous presentation of law. Most recently, we were left with the undifferentiated form of community at the end of Reason, where the “masses” of common-sense commandments were shown to be expressions of unquestioned, tribal custom. Here, in *Spirit*, the self-identical community, the homogeneous unicity of the Greek city represents both its smoothed out, ideal

beauty and its problem. For it is this very unity of the societal configuration that makes tragic difference the only *real* differentiation of which it is capable. As we will see, in a reciprocal fashion, it is the impoverished, binary nature of tragic difference that will render its unmediated resolution *in-different*, that is, comical, terrible, and Roman.

Through the conflict between King Creon and his niece Antigone, tragedy, as presented in the language of Sophocles, introduces a radical difference into the life of the *polis*, one which will determine its fate. In order to truly grasp the actual societal aspect of tragedy and the difference that it presents, it is necessary to see that, on Hegel's reading, far from forming a mere artistic expression, removed from the true, serious affairs of the city, tragedy is played or rather is *played out* at its very heart; its language, in a fully performative sense, actually participates in the formation of Classical Greek life. Thus, when Hegel returns to the subject of tragedy in the Religion chapter, he refers to it as "this higher language," which is articulated through "the actual speech of the actors themselves" (M733/W3, 534).

For Hegel, tragedy actively participates in the ethical (*sittliche*) life of the *polis*. Consequently, its language constitutes a real and effective instance of societal differentiation in that its words are actually performed, by real actors speaking on stage, before a public of citizens who participate in the highly ritualized event. In this way, the public actually partakes in and of a drama that turns on the conflict between two different notions of right. Tragedy, we might say, is a shared form of worship (*Cultus*), celebrated around and through the words of the play, just as, much later, parliamentary democracy will take place in the communal celebration of the written (and performed) political constitution. Drawing on this analogy, we may see how, in the life of the Greek *polis*, tragedy forms the sole and unique *institution* of political difference. Indeed, on Hegel's reading, the only difference that animates the political life of the Classical Greek city-state is one enacted in the actual language of tragedy, publicly performed and celebrated in the spiritual, ethical lives of the citizens. Consequently, recognizing the real role that tragedy plays in the *life* of the *polis* means recognizing the differentiating role that it brings about there, over against the immediate tribal nature of national custom expressed in the notion of "beautiful individuality."

While the introduction of differentiation into the elemental, tribal unicity of the traditional Greek community may be seen as progress, the problem is that tragic difference remains necessarily bipolar. It is the expression of two unilateral positions, of an oppositional, conflictual dilemma between two notions of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*): *either* public *or* private, a binarity as uncompromising as the positions of Creon (the laws of the city) and Antigone (the laws of family). As we may already anticipate from our knowledge of Hegelian dialectics, the truth must involve a more complex mediation, one that takes into account both positions, a mediation where the public and private spheres are not mutually exclusive but participate in a whole palette of (modern) *particular* state institutions. Taken simply as it is, the exclusively binary political opposition presented by tragedy proves to be unstable and fragile, precisely because of the lack of institutional mediation within tragic discourse itself. In this context, the political participation

of the citizens is divided into two spheres, between two notions of right. Of course, women, as is also the case for slaves and children, are excluded from the public sphere. Reciprocally, men are ideally dissociated from the sphere of private, family interests, “lower” concerns that are not meant to interfere with the high-minded, rational deliberations of the agora. Consequently, in Greek political life, the excluded private interests only surface as unfortunate irruptions of influence-peddling, bribery, and other abuses of power, sex, and intrigue: the very stuff with which the tragic plot, we might say, thickens.

Let us not forget that the mutually exclusive confrontation presented in tragedy is framed in terms of law, which we have examined in light of the ambiguity that Hegel finds there generally. The language-world of tragedy that Hegel describes in the first chapter of *Spirit* (the Ethical Order) is indeed the societal embodiment of the ambiguous relation between subject and predicate. When the (women’s) law of the Penates is subject, then the “laws” of man become the determinable predicate; when the laws of man (the state) are subject, then the “laws” of women, the Penates, and their customs become the determinable predicate. Of course, as we have seen, this unilateral form of judgment takes the predicate as an empty sign, ripe for arbitrary determination, rather than as a vanishing word, whose meaning must outstrip it within the speculative, societal copula. Such a speculative outcome will bring about mediating institutional forms beyond those witnessed in the Greek world of tragic difference, a world where, once again, “difference” is really just an expression of bipolar, exclusive self-identity, devoid of hermeneutical openness. As our prior examinations of law have shown, the realized ambiguity between subject and predicate brings about a new societal figure, one which is characterized by its immediate un-differentiated communal form. The same dialectical outcome will follow the legalistic ambiguity of the tragic Greek world: in the form of the indifference that Hegel associates with comedy and its linguistic instantiation in the Roman world, along with its corollary notion of juridical personhood.

Such an unmediated outcome, the result of the unreconciled legalistic conflict between two unilateral notions of law, each with its contrary predicative action, falls upon the two antagonists as a hard, alien fate, one imposed by the tragi-comic figure of the bearded Zeus (cf. M742/W3, 541).

Only in the downfall of both sides alike is absolute right accomplished, and the ethical substance as the negative power which engulfs both sides, that is, omnipotent righteous Destiny, steps on the scene. (M472/W3, 349)

The heteronomy of this resolution is already, in Hegelian terms, an expression of indifference, to the extent that the antagonists are not allowed to actualize their own conceptual movement (aka freedom). Rather, the two political actors, representing the public and private spheres, the opposed laws of man and woman, experience a fate that seems to fall upon them like a purely natural, deterministic necessity. In the same manner, we might say that the destiny of the Greek world itself appeared to simply happen to it, as something that came over the horizon, as something foreign, imposed upon it by historical facts, by the Peloponnesian

War, by the rise of Rome, by an external necessity that seemed to determine its fate. The destiny that befalls the Greek world of tragic difference, as expressed by Hegel, with veiled references to other tragedies, for example, *Seven Against Thebes* (M474/W3, 351), is, in fact, its *own* “blank destiny” (M477/W3, 280). Indeed, all the tragic references recount the same dialectical outcome: the “ruin of the ethical substance and its passage into another form” (M476). In truth, the fateful figure of Zeus is no more than a handy representation for oscillating ambiguity within the notion of law itself, for “the fact that the ethical consciousness is directed onto the law in a way that is essentially immediate” (ibid.), where copulative difference is still unmediated.

Incapable of generating more articulated and complex forms of mediation, that is, the various sociopolitical forms of institutional language resulting from the interplay between public and private rights and interests, and which define the idea of the modern state, the exclusively binary, oppositional difference that Hegel attributes to the Greek city dissolves into a state of in-difference. Historically, this condition occurs in the rise of the Roman world, where tragedy is replaced by comedy (cf. M744-47/W3, 541–4), a decadence already prefigured in the works of Aristophanes, and which we will address in more detail in the Religion chapter. For now, let us say that the world of Roman comedy, which follows the Greek world of tragic difference, is one where all oppositional distinction is done away with, where anything goes, where the Good, the True, and the Beautiful are matters of indifference; relativism reigns, one might say, where the citizen has no choice but to remain indifferent to everything, since everything is truly without any real difference. The Roman world, we might say, is a world of “whatever.”

The Roman world that Hegel evokes, in the *Phenomenology*, helps us comprehend the political character of comedy in relation to his portrayal of the Greek world, where tragic performance embodies the determinant political feature. The world of Roman comedy is one of “bread and circuses,” a world where deficient individuals such as Commodus, Nero, and Caligula can reign, where a horse may be named consul, where anything is allowable, where the highest Platonic forms have become subjects of laughter, as prefigured by Aristophanes’ characterization of Socrates in *The Clouds*. Of course, as history has shown us, this comic world, the world of the Roman circus, was also distinctly terrible.

Politically, Roman indifference is linguistically (performatively) instantiated in the invention of Roman law and the rights of juridical personhood. While this notion of right can certainly be seen, in terms of the greater historical narrative, as an advance over the intransigent duality of the Greek *polis*, and certainly a progress with regard to the archaic tribal community, the new communal form that arises from the ambiguous conflict in Greek laws is again, like the earlier tribal community, a form of undifferentiated individuality. This is because the juridical person of codified Roman law is an atomic or monadic individual, multiplied ad infinitum, divested of all the *particular* differences that make us actually human. As such, the Roman citizen becomes the naked, cut-out entity of written law.

Rather than embodying both Creon (public right) and Antigone (private right), the Roman juridical creature, we might say, is neither one nor the other. Thus, to

use a French *jeu de mot* that Hegel was fond of reproducing, the juridical person, is, in fact, *personne* (no one). In the brave new Roman world invoked in the “Legal status” section (M477/W3, 355), we now have “a universal community, whose simple universality is soulless and dead, and is alive only in the single individual, qua single” (M475/W3, 352). In such a state it is, in fact, a misnomer to speak of individuality per se, which I have hitherto distinguished from singularity through the added particularity of the former, which has and seeks to maintain itself through its properties. The singular stands dialectically naked before undifferentiated universality, into which it is immediately reflected. That is why here, in the present context, Hegel so heavily qualifies the “Individuum” of Roman law with singularity: “*das einzelne Individuum, als Einzelnes*,” as he puts it (ibid.).

A language-world that accords absolute juridical right to the singular individual cannot help but promote it as the bearer of political power and, indeed, the Caesar is no more than the incarnation of such individuality. He is the individual of individuals or “the single individual, qua singular.” He is “the lord of the world” (M482/W3, 358), the abstract universality that is indistinguishable from the (other) singular individuals that fall into it. He is the individual incarnation of the universality that forms the content of the juridical individuals (ibid.) qua singular. Taking this “simple universality” (M475) in conceptual Hegelian terms, we may understand it as negativity, subjectivity, death, freedom, or desire. The lord of the world, the Caesar, is the incarnation of all these elements. He is a monster of negativity, of subjectivity; his is raw will to power. He is pure predication for whom all others are singular signs, pure reflections of his predicative power, and nothing else.

In the Roman world of indifference, of the undifferentiated juridical personhood that we find in the subsection “Legal status,” the singular individual is a creature of law or, put differently, the reflection of pure “right” (*Rechts*, M477) itself. In ontogrammatical terms, the indifferent, neutral copula through which the juridical individual predicates his right, and is himself predicated as right, is simply the ambiguous reality of the neutral copula that we find in law itself and which we have identified throughout our investigation as its essential feature. Indeed, what allowed us to define law as a “stand-in” for real mediation was the fact that in it the copula presents itself as neutral, as indifferent, as a lens through which predication can flow dogmatically and unilaterally in either directions. Remember that dogmatism, as it appeared in Stoicism, was merely the expression of *unilateral* predication, whether it runs from the predicate to the subject or vice versa. I can just as easily and dogmatically claim, as a Roman citizen, that the law confers my right or that my right is the law. As we saw, it is only hypocrisy that prevents me from seeing the self-reflective nullity of these pronouncements and falling into skepticism.

Here, in Spirit, the singular individual as Roman citizen is the pure reflection of law itself. In other words, he is the “I = I.” In law, Rome predicates the citizen to be the bearer of right (freedom) and, at the same time, the free citizens predicate Rome (and the emperor) as a legal entity. We might say that there is a revealing ambiguity apparent in the expression “subject to the law.” In fact, this ambiguity is

captured in the relationship between the singular citizen and the “lord and master of the world” (M481/W3, 357), since the latter is, himself, simply the *singular* singular individual and the embodiment of law itself. This feature of indifference, the fact that the “lord and master of the world” could be any-*one* at all, is, again, the grounds for the comedic aspect that Hegel associates with the Roman world.

He is a person, but the solitary person who stands over against all the rest. These constitute the real authoritative universality of that person... Cut off from this multiplicity, the solitary self is, in fact, an unreal, impotent self. (M481)

In that the “lord and master of the world” (Cesar) is the law, Hegel demonstrates the ambiguity of the copulative relation between him and each singular citizen as a bearer of infinite, abstract right.

In fact, Hegel associates the indifference of the Roman world with both dogmatic Stoicism and with Skepticism. For the latter is simply the “blank destiny” of the previous (Greek) form of ethical substance, where its “fulness and content” has collapsed into a form of “general confusion and reciprocal dissolution,” built around “the sheer empty unit of the [juridical] person” (M480/W3, 356). It is remarkable that here Hegel refers to “possession” and “property,” concepts that help us understand the individual, rights-bearing, juridical person as an empty linguistic sign. If, as Hegel writes, “the empty unit of the person is, therefore, in its reality a contingent existence” (ibid.), it is because the person is a thoroughly determinable sign. As such, as an unpredicated linguistic sign, he is “without a peculiar [*eigentümlichen*] content of his own” (ibid.). He is not (yet) a vanishing word.

To be a vanishing word, one must have moved beyond the empty statement of “possession” (ibid.) to the reality of “property” (ibid.), whose truth and actuality consists in its “vanishing,” that is, in the fact that its recognized reality takes place in the alienation of property through the contractual transference between different property-bearing individuals. However, here, in the indifferent world of “Legal status,” “property” has not yet attained the contractual status inherent in its vanishing; it is just a name. It is a sophisticated affirmation that is meant to anchor and solidify my status as a rights-bearing individual. I say “sophisticated,” because, as we saw in Perception, the multiplication of properties is meant to guard *against* my vanishing. However, as we also saw, my perdurance is guaranteed only through my continued onto-grammatical status as sign, empty of all meaning. Consequently, here, in “Legal status,” property is “stamped with the same abstract universality” that we find in pure possession; it is simply “called property” (ibid.).

In the world of “Legal status,” property is reduced to mere possession, as expressed in the claim that “this is mine.” In fact, in this context, right is nothing other than “mine” (ibid.), a term that helps us grasp the association Hegel is making between the legal state of personal, infinite (i.e., self-reflecting) right and the Hobbesian state of nature that we encountered in Sense-certainty. Again, here, it is the move to “properties” that might lift us beyond a world of empty signs to one constituted by vanishing words, with their possibility of shared, open meaning but

only on condition that we recognize that the truth of property lies in its alienation (and vanishing) and not in its simple possession.

The qualifying term “positive” that Hegel attaches to the person of right, in M480, means, in the parlance of the day, that this abstract entity is essentially a creature of legal language, thus reinforcing the linguistic reality at play in “Legal status.” Indeed, the formal abstraction of codified Roman right, that is, the lack of real content in juridical personhood, ensures that all the individual really possesses, in such a state of indifference, is abstract right itself. As a juridical person, I am empty of any “specific character” (M480). I am “an empty form” (ibid.), self-reflecting into the empty signs of property qua pure possession, and which reflect back on me, fixating my reciprocal status as a lasting sign.

Finally, we must not forget that the onto-grammatical form that we are visiting together, in the historical moment of the Roman world, with its conception of juridical personhood, has its own performative (and formative) language. Roman law is codified; that is, it is written or it is nothing. It is a language form that actually determines the in-different world that Hegel associates with Rome, the same way that *Antigone* informed the Greek world of tragic difference. In both cases, we have examples of language that does not merely reflect an alien social reality but one that is shared, celebrated, and lived within the ethical space that it forms. Indeed, we should, in this light, think of both tragedy and codified law as concrete institutions within their respective ethical substances. Or rather, tragedy and law should be taken as spiritual texts that are communally performed in societal forms of worship, a religious metaphor that only works if we take “worship” as a shared and yet hermeneutical enterprise, where we agree that the celebrated text is meaningful while remaining open and attentive to the different meanings within.

Because the Spirit chapter presents us with real historical moments of human community, it is tempting and indeed necessary for us to measure ourselves and our contemporary moment against our spiritual past. Thus, the republican reality of Roman codified law and its ideal notion of juridical personhood may remind us of contemporary political ideals where the “ethical substance” is essentially exhausted in the notion of individual rights, a reality based on atomic, personal entities that are only brought together into an amorphous and yet undifferentiated community by some magical unseen hand.

The onto-grammatical similarity between then and now does not mean, as is sometimes misunderstood, that Hegel puts forward a mechanistic, deterministic view of history where all events would be predestined by an uncompromising, dialectical program. The point is rather that when we revisit the past, in order to find there a meaning that is present for us today, historical representations take on a definite narrative structure that we find meaningful. If there can be found, in Hegel, historical determination, it is because our way of comprehending the past is determined by our present way of thinking and recounting it. Taking such temporal reciprocity into account, we see how the movement of human consciousness that Hegel describes in the *Phenomenology* should be seen as a circular, progressively deepening path. If there is “nothing new under the sun,” it is not because nothing new happens but because what does happen is always comprehended by “us”

with reference to what has already passed and to the stories that we have already recounted to ourselves. Historically, therefore, it is possible to jump ahead two millennia because in the Roman period and in our present day, we may recognize the abortive dialectic between tragic difference and comedic indifference that Hegel brings to light in his onto-grammatical presentation of the ancient world.

The Hegelian lesson that I have learned, in reflecting upon the language-worlds of tragic Greece and comedic Rome, concerns the ambiguous relation between difference and indifference, within temporal, human configurations of community. The neutral, contentless copula that forms the essential reality of law is effective in both the tragic world of binary difference and in the comedic world of atomic indifference. Indeed, because both configurations are founded on notions of law, the relation between subject and predicate in each form of community is entirely immediate. The tragic Greek difference between the laws of the state and the laws of the hearth (the Penates, custom) is unmediated and therefore is actually an expression of indifference. In other words, since the opposing positions of tragedy are unilateral, unreconciled, and unmediated, they are, in fact, expressions of radical indifference. One position is indifferent to the other; each is totally exclusive of the other.

Similarly, the world of Roman indifference, where each individual (juridical) person is thoroughly singular and atomic, is a state that instantiates the radical, monadic difference between each individual as a rights-bearing sign, avid for property. A state founded entirely on the notion of individual right is a state where each citizen claims essential differentiation, within a language-world that is fundamentally in-different. The problem is the lack of true differentiation in the copula, in the actual, even institutional, mediating structures that make a human community organic, in the sense that Hegel implies in his *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*. There, courts, schools, universities, parliaments, the press (aka the media), and other ethical realities perform discursive realities that mediate between the public and the private spheres, between Creon and Antigone.

For us (*für uns*), *Phenomenologists* intent on knowing ourselves through the ambiguous otherness of history, Hegel invites us to be wary of tragic discourse in our own time, discourse that posits stubborn, uncompromising oppositions between “good and evil,” between “rich and poor,” “native-born and immigrant,” “man versus woman,” “ecology versus progress,” “private versus public,” etc. Such bipolar, recalcitrant positions carry within them the danger of collapse into what are proto-fascistic states of “Roman” indifference. Conversely, undifferentiated, homogeneous communities, configuring themselves around empty discourses of infinite individual rights, exclusive of recognized, shared particular (e.g., multicultural) difference, can do no better than generate difference in a strictly binary, tragic fashion, one that ultimately embraces the grammar of “us versus them.”

We might find it reassuring that “our” world still appears to hold nuanced, institutional differentiation; we might even congratulate ourselves on the complexity of the mediating sociopolitical and cultural structures that furnish the

world that we live in. While these may appear to be under threat from pervasive individualism and waves of populism, we are clearly not living in the ancient world of tragic Greece or comedic Rome. However, the onto-grammatical oscillation between tragic difference and comedic indifference teaches us that the complex structures of mediating differentiation must never be taken for granted. It should also help us see that such structures of mediation are themselves constituted by performative discourses that Hegel presents as speculative (the hermeneutically open interplay between identity and difference).

While the expression “speculative language” may seem abstract, its actual instantiation should be familiar to us all: the letters of patent, mission statements, contracts, doctrines, legislative bills of law, constitutional amendments, memoirs, memoranda, archives, and so on, which we come together to discuss, reform, interpret, change, preserve, and rewrite, and the schools, courts, churches, parliaments, legislatures, boardrooms, libraries, and so on where such language takes place and is communally shared. It should be no surprise that the threat to these structures of civil society, to what we call “the rule of law,” is similarly linguistic in nature, expressed in the onto-grammatical forms of tragi-comic (in)difference that Hegel presents in this chapter, where copulative content is evacuated, leaving a “Twitter-verse” of empty, arbitrarily determinable and thus meaningless signs. A Hobbesian state of nature and nominalism.

The significant difference between the world of Roman juridical indifference, in Spirit, and the animal “state of nature” that we extrapolated in Sense-certainty is that, as a moment of spirit, the language-world of Legal Status is a real, historical moment, where real words have determined its world-historical, human reality. For us, the words of *Antigone* and the legal code of Rome have become more than empty signs. We understand them as vanishing words and as so-heard (*entendus*) come to form the content of a greater narrative, for if they were not vanishing, we would not find them meaningful or be able to recognize ourselves in them as having been.

Culture

At the end of Spirit’s “Ethical Order,” just before “Culture” (M483/W3, 359), Hegel refers to the form of unhappy consciousness that we discovered in Self-consciousness. However, now, as a figure of Spirit, having passed through its Roman incarnation in actual, juridical personhood, self-consciousness itself has become a “universal” feature of the world. Because we first encountered self-consciousness, in the eponymous chapter, as an unhappy, solitary figure struggling for an elementary degree of freedom and recognition, the socialization of self-consciousness, in the Ethical Order, seems like a positive outcome. Freedom is no longer a strictly individual affair but is now instantiated into the worldly, historical form of Roman, rights-bearing personhood. However, this also means that the new worldly, historical figure of self-consciousness is essentially unhappy. In Hegel’s terms, he is “alienated from himself” (*ibid.*).

Since unhappy consciousness, as we saw, results from the unresolved contradiction between Roman Stoicism and Skepticism, we can say that it is post-ancient and consequently, in that sense, modern. Indeed, Hegel's reference to unhappy consciousness, here, in Spirit, is clearly to a worldly historical narrative where the new "universal" Church has arisen from and now stands opposed to the "reality from which it is alienated" (M483), that is, from the Roman reality that is no longer its own. The feature of unhappiness that we saw arise in Self-consciousness and resurface again in the individual's struggle with the world, in Reason, has now, in Spirit, become a universal feature of the modern world. Unhappiness or self-alienation is no longer exclusively the experience of the modern *individual* (of Reason) per se but is now inscribed in the world-historical form of modernity itself and, as such, informs the narrative of the Culture and Morality chapters.

Just as the figure of unhappy self-consciousness first arose from the unreconciled interplay between dogmatic Stoicism and radical Skepticism, its world-historical actuality, in modern Culture, arises from the same Roman conditions. However, the Self-consciousness and Reason chapters have allowed us to comprehend this opposition in more modern terms: inner and outer; essence and existence; immanence and transcendence; heart or virtue and the way of the world; good and bad, and so on. All these oppositions, we found, can be conceived in terms of (Hegel's understanding of) the Kantian *Verstand* and its fundamental division between intuition and categorical judging. In other words, the modern individual, as we saw, is a creature thoroughly determined and undermined by the dichotomy between the essential transcendence of inner feeling and outer immanence or existence, in all its depreciated, that is, unessential, forms. The conflict is also expressed in the opposition between unconditioned purity and the perversity of conditioned reality or in Kantian terms again, between freedom of the moral will and heteronomous, natural causation. I have tried to show how this unhappy dichotomy is already there in stoical immanence and its language of dogmatism, over against the pure inner, mute abyss of radical skepticism.

In the linguistic terms that I have been using, the unhappy contradiction between dogmatism and skepticism means that the pure, inner onto-grammatical subject must always traduce itself in its predication, because its predicates can never be anything other than impoverished (empty), alien (natural) signs, ripe for arbitrary determination. The subject first predicates the world as Other, alien, and opposed. As we also saw, it is sophistical hypocrisy that prevents the dogmatic subject from recognizing what it is actually doing by predicating itself and thus embracing the "skeptical" aspect of its predications as the essential "vanishing" of both itself and the sign that it invests. As we have seen, the sophistical hypocrisy that Hegel associates with the language of dogmatism allows the subject to fix or maintain itself within its semantic universe of nominalist signs. The speculative, Hegelian lesson is that the "here," "now," and "this" that the dogmatic nominalist relies upon for his own longevity are archetypical vanishing words, and that the properties that are dogmatically assigned to both subject and perceived object are meaningful only to the extent that they are contractually surrendered, that is, in greater dialogical or hermeneutical narrative forms.

We are now in the province of Spirit, and so the existentialist forms of unhappiness, which may be generally grasped as individual attempts at personal authenticity over against the horizon of being-in-the-world, are now actual historical features of the world itself. This is what Culture is about: societal/communal, world-historical forms of unhappiness, that is, oppositions that can all be traced to the essential contradiction between dogmatism and skepticism, between immanence and transcendence, inner and outer, essence and existence, and so on.

More specifically, in Culture, the essential opposition or “alienation” of self-consciousness now takes the worldly forms of, for example, noble consciousness versus state power and wealth (the bourgeoisie), in the subsection “Culture and Its Realm of Actuality” (M488/W3, 363) or, most characteristically, the opposed forms of faith and reason, in the other sections, leading up to the Enlightenment’s cautionary outcome in French Revolutionary Terror (M582/W3, 431). In terms of dogmatism and skepticism, the Culture chapter articulates the collapse of various forms of the former, at play in the (French and German) Enlightenment, into the skeptical negativity portrayed in the historical reality of the Terror, where the punctual repetitiveness of the guillotine’s falling blade bespeaks the vanishing destiny of singular body/signs, whose final words are nothing more than “here,” “now,” “this.”

As moments of Spirit, these historical moments of our modern world, the societal conflict between the nobility and the bourgeoisie, the opposition between faith and reason, and Revolutionary Terror, all have their own discursive elements, which we may understand, as we have been doing, in terms of the judgment form of predication around the copula, forms that we have witnessed in Self-consciousness and Reason. For us now, in Spirit, we may understand these forms as *having been*, as the content of our own historical narrative. It is because we acknowledge historical content as both “us and not-us” that we accept history itself as more than an amalgam of empty signs. History, as predicated words, is lent a voice and speaks back to us. Its meaning takes place in the speculative copula, in the written material that is always only meaningful in an actual communal context. History is always “ours,” regardless of who “we” may be.

I know from experience how disheartening it is, reading a given commentary on Hegel, to be suddenly presented with a huge, undigested block of actual Hegel text! I will spare the reader this pain while at the same time stating that almost everything that I have been presenting in this book, in terms of vanishing words, speculative language, meaning, the copula, and so on, is to be found (in highly condensed form) in the paragraphs M508-9 (W3, 376) of the first section on Culture. I am, of course, assuming that the reader has access to the Hegel text of the *Phenomenology* and so can only invite them to read or reread those two paragraphs. Hopefully, the words therein will prove themselves to be *vanishing*, in a way that presents the Hegel text as a living and lively predicate that speaks back to us.

Besides supporting my argument, and through it perhaps allowing the *Phenomenology*, as a whole, to speak to us in a new way, the above-mentioned

paragraphs are key to grasping the section where they appear: "Culture and Its Realm of Actuality" (M488/W3, 363). Indeed, Hegel's insistence on language in M508-9 tells us that the dichotomies that I have insisted upon, as underlying the unhappy spiritual reality of the modern world, should be grasped linguistically. We see that, at least in the theater of what might be broadly called political life, reality is, above all, linguistic. Indeed, we witnessed this fact earlier, in our discussion of the ancient world, with references to tragedy, to comedy, and to codified law.

Although, in M508, he is talking about the language of honorable, noble self-renunciation that invests the absolute monarch with power (Louis XIV: *L'état, c'est moi.*), Hegel generalizes his deliberations as "the form which language itself is" (my emphasis). This form is performative; it is a "power" that "performs what has to be performed." As such, there is a native ambiguity in the word "*Sprache*" (and its derivative, "*Sprechens*"), which Miller translates variously as "language," and as "speech" or "speaking." In fact, what the German language is telling us here is that language itself "speaks out," in all its forms, including "physiognomic expression." Language, essentially, "exists for others. Otherwise the 'I', this pure 'I', is non-existent, is not there." Further on, "This real existence of the 'I' [in language] is... an objectivity which has in it the true nature of the 'I'." I have been presenting "objectivity," onto-grammatically, in terms of the predicate, as a sign that is invested with the subject in order to constitute what I have called the vanishing word. It is "vanishing" because it has been invested (predicated) with the (vanishing) "I."

For readers unconvinced by my insistence on *Verschwinden* (vanishing), I can only again invite them to turn to the Hegelian text itself, where he writes: the "manifesting [of the I, i.e. its predication] is also at once the externalization and the vanishing of this particular 'I'." This manifestation or predication into objectivity, into signs/bodies that are inhabited with "universal" meaning, is *for others*, and is thus positively inter-subjective: "The I that utters itself is heard or perceived; it is an infection in which it has passed into unity with those for whom it is a real existence." The surprising text continues, presenting the dialectical destiny of empty signs, which, in becoming vanishing words, espouse their speculative vocation:

That [the subject] is perceived or heard means that its real existence [i.e. as a sign] dies away... and its real existence is just this: that as a self-conscious Now, as a real existence, it is not a real existence, and through this vanishing it is a real existence [qua word]. This vanishing is thus itself at once its abiding; it is its own knowing of itself and its knowing itself as a self that has passed over into another self.

The "passing over into another self" is simply the act of predication, which informs the predicate/sign with its own predicative agency, thus ensuring the reciprocal "counter-thrust" (M61/W3, 59), within the speculative proposition. But I've gotten ahead of myself.

In Culture's evocation of the *ancien régime*, it is the performative power of language, as an act of predication qua flattery, that invests the monarch with

absolute powers. Of course, we can also see this predication as a transfer of right, from the nobles onto the king. However, Hegel presents this transfer in linguistic terms. The king is initially nothing but an empty sign, a “proper name” or “empty name” (M512/W3, 379) that is predicated to absolute status by his noble followers. It is thus “only by his name that the monarch is absolutely separated off from everyone else” (ibid.). Of course, the dialectical irony is that the “empty name,” fully invested or predicated, for example, “Louis XIV,” has now become a *word* and so must vanish, become a “has been”; of course in so doing, he may become an ambiguously meaningful part of (Hegelian) history.

Conversely, we might say that the noble consciousness, in positing itself (*sich setzen, Satz*), in predicating its selfhood into the empty sign that is the monarch, conversely vanishes and remains only as a mere sign, a sign/body at the disposition of the monarch, who is now fully informed with the universal subjectivity of his vassals. Thus, the noble “sacrifices the single individual to the universal, thereby bringing this into existence: the person, who voluntarily renounces possessions” (M503/W3, 373). The “person” per se, we recall from our exploration of juridical personhood, is devoid of property (and properties). In the present context, as a noble individual who has renounced the particular properties through which he attempted to maintain himself (cf. Perception), he has vanished, falling back into the status of an empty sign. As a singular, natural entity, the sign can do no better than collapse into a generality. Consequently, nobility may be part of history but only as a “species” (an *espèce*), the French term Hegel uses to denote the natural generality of the category (*espèce de* is a French insult, M489, M524). Only as such a class does the word “nobility” have some past meaning. The proper names (signs) of the monarch’s attendants are historically meaningless. Their historical roles, if any, are completely determined by the whims of the monarch whom they have made the absolute subject.

In the above case, nobility initially aligns with the skeptical moment, the moment that we associated with feeling, intuition, and the pure negating power of subjectivity per se. State power, that is, the monarch, on the other hand, represents the dogmatic, immanent side of the equation, a substance rather than a subject. Thus, “noble consciousness finds itself, in the judgment, confronting the state power in such a way that the latter is, indeed, not yet a self but only the universal substance” (M502/W3, 372). In fact, the dialectic of nobility and state power replays the paradoxical relation that we discovered between skepticism and dogmatism. The skeptic, like the noble, renounces the world, pulls back into silent, intuitive subjectivity. However, as an onto-grammatical subject, the noble skeptic must posit itself, must pronounce itself, must predicate itself *dogmatically* and so invests the substantial body/sign of state power, which is always ready at hand.

As was the case with the skeptic, the predication by the noble into the state power of the monarchy cannot help but involve the noble in the very world he sought to renounce. His skeptical self-abnegation must express itself and it can only do so as dogmatic flattery. Thus, “the heroism of silent service becomes the heroism of flattery” (M511/W3, 378). Indeed, it can be no other way, since such a proposition (*Satz*) as the one carried out between noble and monarch takes place

through the neutral, empty copula, the empty medium or lens in the unilateral, self-reflective judgment of $I = I$. Such self-reflection is the “vanity” that defines the closing paragraphs of “Culture in the Realm of Actuality,” the first section of Culture.

Before going there, I would like to briefly mention what I feel is the ongoing and contemporary lesson that we may derive from Hegel's exploration of monarchical state power. What we learn is the following: in despotic systems of governance, the singular despot is initially or in-himself (and it usually is a “he”) an empty sign, a mere name devoid of any qualities. He is not a “natural leader,” gifted, a genius, a great leader, father of the nation, and so on. In fact, he is entirely meaningless without the power that is predicated into him by his followers, his subjects, in both senses of the term. These are first and foremost the sycophantic “nobles” who find their own wills reflected in the despot qua sign, now made word, *the* word. There is, again, a Hobbesian aspect here. Like the Leviathan, Hegel's monarch does not govern by divine right (which only confers on the monarch his empty name). Both “leaders” derive their power from a massive, unilateral transfer of right (or predication) by which they come to represent power itself. Once again, without this transference, the king has no clothes. He is a naked sign signifying nothing. Further, Hegel (and Hobbes?) teaches us that the despot, as the singular, predicated individual, rules over a kingdom of other singular individuals. The very singularity of the great leader must be seen as a reflection of all subjects, where each is taken as a singular subject (in all senses of the word). Of course, once predicated as the leader, as the now subjective substance or word, the Leviathan can do no more than reflectively judge his people as empty, singular signs, open to the whims of arbitrary predication.

As a creature of self-reflecting predication, the singular monarch implies a world of individuals; the fact that he is *the* “person” implies a world of other “persons” who are really *personne*, that is, no one but singular individuals. This feature of the despotic world recalls what Hannah Arendt has to say about totalitarian systems of “governance”: besides being monstrous apparatuses of ideology, they work at breaking down every existing societal, political, and civil structure, in order to produce a world of terror, where each individual lives in fear and distrust of their neighbor. And yes, this is exactly how Hegel sees the French Revolutionary Terror, the historical moment that will later close the Culture chapter: a state whose “fury of destruction” (M589/W3, 435) brings about the complete “destruction of the actual organization of the world” (M590). If the language of the guillotine is one of total indifference, where its “flat, commonplace monosyllable” expresses the entire “wisdom of the government” (M591/W3, 436), it is because each decapitated individual is severed from its meaning, rendered a body as meaningless sign. Of course, as dialectical scholars we know that reducing his individual subjects to dead signs means that the despot no longer derives his own meaning from their subjective predication and so his own status as word is vanishing.

In other words, the meaningless, monosyllabic discourse of the Terror echoes the indifference that we discovered above, in the comedic world of Roman individualism. In both cases, the comedy is decidedly dark, where death “has no

more significance than cutting off the head of a cabbage" (M590/W3, 359) and where the Caesar may just as easily choose a horse or a man for Consul, as Caligula is said to have done. But perhaps that is what happens when notions of the Good and the Beautiful become mere objects of jest and the only possibility of mediating reconciliation between the different cultural expressions of immanence and transcendence (dogmatism and skeptical feeling) is left in the hands of a bearded Zeus or an *Ubu roi*, whose determinations of fate are hard and arbitrary. If we are able to draw a historical parallel, over two millennia, between the comedic, terrible worlds of ancient Rome and Revolutionary France (with its "republican" pretensions), it is because they share the onto-grammatical features that we have associated with indifference, and located in the contentless copula of unilateral self-reflection, where, in both cases, "the sheer terror of the negative [...] contains nothing positive, nothing that fills it with a content" (M594/W3, 361).

Culture (*Bildung*) is the Hegelian narrative of formation; it is a narrative of "our" formative years as Hegelian *Phenomenologists*, presenting the historical content in which we are invited to recognize our present selves as *having been*, as vanishing words. With every educative, pedagogical process, as Lessing had already pointed out in his hugely influential essay on the *Education of the Human Race* and as Hegel, himself a lifelong pedagogue, must have known, we have to follow the learning process. No shortcuts. No skipping steps. Culture, as the educational process of and for humanity (aka Spirit), involves allowing *Bildung* to roll out over time, building on past experience. The absolute skepticism of the Terror, where worldly structures are annihilated in a frenzy of individual freedom qua negativity, follows the dogmatic expressions of modernity that we have only just introduced, with reference to the *ancien régime*, and to which we must return. These latter expressions carry within them their own articulations of the same essentially modern dilemma between skeptical negativity and dogmatic predication. In the political struggle between nobility and monarchical state government, we see how the modern dilemma involved conceiving nobility as expressing the skepticism of inner feeling, with its forms of honor, renunciation, heart, and so on, and state power as a form of dogmatism, whose power is "authoritative as language" (M508/W3, 308).

As we saw, the contradictory relation between the two poles means that, in order to exercise its self-sacrifice, the "skeptical" nobles must break their silent renunciation and "speak out" in the categorical, dogmatic language of praise and flattery; in doing so, they predicate the monarch as a simple word, invested with nothing but their own "inner" subjectivity. But the monarch cannot remain this essential power or will. He must pronounce himself, must predicate *his* power in order for it to exist. To do so, he must take the nobles as signs, open to the exercise his predicative power. Thus, now as subjects (in both senses of the word), the nobles become "ignoble" (M513/W3, 380); they are out for themselves. Their former skeptical renouncement becomes newly dogmatic. They are thus conflicted regarding their "inner nature" (*ibid.*), a feature that we saw associated with modern unhappy consciousness generally, and which Hegel presents in these pages, in terms of "extreme rebellion" (M517/W3, 382), that of bourgeois insurgency. The

individual “self-consciousness thus enriched by universal power” (by monarchical predication) takes the form of “a universal beneficence” which is Hegel’s conception of the newly configured bourgeois world of “wealth” (M514/W3, 381).

While this transition from noble consciousness to the bourgeoisie, in these pages, may be difficult to follow and easy to therefore ignore, I would first point out that it is crucial in bringing into play an important political aspect of the modern skepticism-dogmatism dilemma: the ambiguous opposition between the two classes. Second, in presenting wealth itself as a form of language (M520/W3, 384), as the result of predication, Hegel is portraying its existence as a representation, a seminal idea that informs Marx’s idea that money is the representation of labor, along with our own consumerist, bourgeois consciousness that wealth really *means* something, that is, represents something greater than simply possessions or property. Whereas, in the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel presents the truth of property in the real, societally actual language of the contract, in which the essential *vanishing* (i.e., transfer) of property is linguistically instantiated and recognized, here, as a feature of the modern bourgeois world, wealth is presented as “the language of flattery [...] of base flattery” (ibid.).

The difference between the two contexts lies in the fact that the *Philosophy of Right* presents property (and wealth) within the institutional discourses of the organic state (laws, courts of law, parliaments, corporations, constitutions, etc.), whereas here, in the *Phenomenology’s* Culture chapter, wealth arises in the world of modern individualism, at the historical moment of the collapse of the *ancien régime* and the birth of the modern bourgeoisie, defined by the concepts of Enlightenment thought and discourse that we encountered in Reason. Here, wealth appears as a representation, as a form of “base flattery,” and, thus, as an instrument of pre-revolutionary political power, which, as we have seen, is expressed individualistically.

Please recall, however, that we are now in the province of Spirit. The form of Enlightenment individualism that we uncovered in the Reason chapter, as a form of self-consciousness measuring itself against and in the existing world, is now a world-historical moment. The period that Hegel has in mind is clearly the Enlightenment, not only in its French embodiment but as a historical chapter in “our” narrative, wherein distinct features arise that may be clearly identified as making up the modern Western world. In that context, wealth is more than the simple fact of having possessions and the ability to exchange them. It is, as we know, many other things: a state of mind (spirit); an instrument of (political) power; a language that represents and means many things or, conversely, a language that means nothing in itself, that is, a language of pure signs, data. Indeed, today, the terms “wealth” and “data” are virtually interchangeable. Briefly, money talks, or, put more formally, as language, wealth is an important discourse of modernity.

Toward the end of “Culture in Its Realm of Actuality,” we find a clear reference to Diderot’s strange novel, *Rameau’s Nephew*. Although it may be tempting to take this written work itself as the performative linguistic actuality of French Enlightenment culture, in the same way that we took *Antigone* and tragedy generally as the linguistic performance of radical difference within the Greek

world of unified custom, we must mark the distinctions. *Rameau's Nephew* certainly did not have the performative reach within French society that *Antigone* enjoyed in Athens. In fact, Diderot's work was first published not in French but rather in German, in 1805, translated by Goethe, and was first read and known in the German late-*Aufklärung*, post-Revolutionary culture and not in the earlier French Enlightenment, where Diderot had obviously been a main player. What does this tell us?

First, it should be noted that the novel is dialogical in form, taking place between "Me" and "Him," the first character purportedly representing Diderot and the second, the nephew of the famous composer Jean-Philippe Rameau. The nephew represents a kind of resentful, cultured, and failed individual, living under the shadow of his illustrious uncle and chafing against the *Encyclopedic* Enlightenment culture generally. "Me," we therefore suppose, is Diderot, a driving force in the *Encyclopedia* project and the incarnation of the French Enlightenment, along with its values of universal reason, humanity, freedom, and culture (as progressive *Bildung*). However, the delineation between the two points of view is immediately blurred because it is Diderot himself, qua the author of the novel, who gives full voice to the questioning of Enlightenment culture through "his" antagonist in the dialogue, the nephew. Consequently, the "Me" of the dialogue is not really "Me" qua Diderot himself or if it is, then so is his literary creature: Rameau's nephew, "Him." In fact, Diderot as author seems to be using the novel in order to express his own reservations about Enlightenment culture itself, through a character that he himself invents and puts into dialogue with "Me." Therefore, rather than comprehending the lines of the conflicted, resentful, cultured but failed nephew as expressive of late-*Aufklärung* culture that Hegel has in mind, it is the work itself, in its ambiguous presentation of the author and "his" Other, that is most significant. Indeed, it is the literary work itself, *Rameau's Nephew*, in its ambiguously dialogical form (where "Me" is not really "Me" but another "Me," and the Other is also "me," the author), that presents the linguistic embodiment of the contemporary culture that Hegel has in his sights.

Second, the fact that the work only appeared translated in German, while Hegel was writing the *Phenomenology* (1807), is crucially significant for how we are to deal with it. Briefly, Hegel reads *Rameau's Nephew* as a work of ironic Romanticism, and thus reflective of the same literary production that he finds and abhors in Friedrich Schlegel's fragmentary writings, in the *Athenaeum Review*, which sputtered out of existence after two short years, in 1800, and in his scandalous "post-modern" novel *Lucinde* (1799). Schlegel's novel, like Diderot's, confuses and dissolves the autobiographical identity of the authorial "first person" and presents, through its palette of characters who both *are* and *are not* Schlegel, dogmatic judgments on the world, art, religion, love, and so on.

I have written a book on Hegel's critique of ironic Romanticism (*The Anti-Romantic*, 2014) for those readers interested in exploring this crucial, polemical aspect of Hegel's thought. Without going too extensively into the question here, it is striking that in the Culture section, Hegel employs many of the same expressions that he uses, years later, in Berlin, in his critique of Schlegel. First, judgment (*Urteil*)

is presented in the same way that Hegel later (mis)understands Romantic irony in his Berlin writings, as “destructive” language that “strips of their significance all those moments which are supposed to count as the true being” (M521/W3, 385). As with Hegel’s later take on Romantic irony, such judgments represent a “nihilistic game which it plays with itself” (ibid.); “it overpowers everything” (ibid.). Further, its dominance over “possessions of power and wealth” consists in showing their vanity, in “witty (*geistreichen*) talk” (M526/W3, 389).

Indeed, vanity is the key in relating Hegel’s critique of Culture to his take on Schlegel’s brand of irony, which Hegel defines most directly as a vanity that “renders vain” everything that really matters. Here, in the *Phenomenology*:

In that aspect of the return into the self [i.e. self-reflection], the vanity of all things is its own vanity, it is itself vain. It is the self-centered self that knows, not only how to pass judgment on and chatter about everything, but how to give witty expression to the contradiction that is present in the solid elements of the actual world [...] This vanity at the same time needs the vanity of all things in order to get from them the consciousness of self; it therefore creates this vanity itself and is the soul that supports it. (ibid.)

Twenty years later, in his review of K. F. W. Solger’s posthumous writings, Hegel defines Romantic irony as a “rendering vain” (*Vereitelung*), undertaken through the judgments of the ironic individual: Friedrich Schlegel (W11, 233–4).

My point in relating Diderot’s novel to Hegel’s critique of Schlegel is more than an exercise in erudition. Rather, it helps illustrate the onto-grammatical reading of the *Phenomenology*’s forms of consciousness, as they play out in the historical, societal figures of Spirit. Ironic “vanitization” (*Vereitelung*) or the rendering vain of “all things” is fundamentally linguistic in nature. Its action takes place in the form of judgment (*Urteil*), that is, in the grammatical relation between subject and predicate. Ironic judging is “vain” because the holistic nature of what it judges, that is, its predicate as a meaningful word, an actual soul, is ripped apart, divorced of its significance, reduced to the status of empty, arbitrary sign. The “rendering vain” or “vanitization” of the “solid elements of the actual world” is performed through the self-reflection of the judging subject’s own *Zerrissenheit* (M526/W3, 389), that is, through the disrupted nature of his own self-relation as empty of all copulative content. In other words, the vain (modern) individual projects his vanity onto the world through his judgments, which are language acts of mere vanity, in a dizzying series of affirmations that can be made because of the absence of any reality in the copula between subject and predicate. As Hegel writes, in M520 (W3, 384):

It is the sameness of the identical judgment in which one and the same personality is both subject and predicate [...] and subject and predicate are utterly indifferent, immediate beings which have nothing to do with one another.

The vanity of the ironic individual and the “utter indifference” between subject and predicate is best expressed in the now-familiar formula of $I = I$.

The last line of the above quotation expresses the truth of the ironic language of judgment: because subject and predicate are “indifferent” to one another, they are thoroughly distinct, divorced, and separate. This is the case because they are “immediate,” that is, without copulative mediation. As we have seen, the neutral, empty copula means that the relation between subject and predicate is purely arbitrary, and that is because no “counter-thrust” (M61) is allowed on the part of the predicate. It has lost its status as meaningful word. The predicate becomes a mere reflection of subjective determination. The consciousness of such vain self-reflection is “disrupted” and its language “is the perfect language and the authentic existent spirit of this entire world of culture” (M520).

The inner disruption of modern individual consciousness is grounded in the fundamental dichotomy between skepticism (inner feeling, heart, transcendence, nobility, etc.) and dogmatism (immanence, the way of the world, the ignoble bourgeois, etc.), which Hegel understands onto-grammatically as a certain unmediated relation between subject and predicate, where each turns its back on the other and goes its separate way. In judging, that is, in pronouncing itself, which the modern, disrupted self cannot help but do, the subject projects, through its judgments, its own disrupted reality onto the linguistic world that it posits. Of course, as was the case with our earlier discussion of skepticism, the sophistical hypocrisy of the understanding allows it to maintain the fiction that the world that it judges (as disrupted) is something other than the reflection of its own self-pronouncements. This is the deeper technical meaning that Hegel attributes to hypocrisy, another recurring trait that is assigned to Schlegel, in the Berlin writings (e.g., in the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*, s. 140, where Hegel deals with Schlegel and vanity).

Consequently, just as was the case with the tragic verb in Greece and the juridical personhood of law, the late-modern world has its own language, one that not only reflects its reality but actually performs that reality as its “authentic existent spirit” (M520): the language of ironic, vain individualism. In fact, as I show in my book on Hegel’s critique of ironic romanticism, there is no distinction, for Hegel, between the literary productions of the ironic author and his own natural individuality. Thus, the novel *Lucinde* is the perfect linguistic expression, the discursive embodiment of the ironic individuality that is Schlegel himself, in the same way that *Rameau’s Nephew* is the onto-grammatical reality of its modern author (Diderot? Goethe?). In these cases, the author is a thoroughly modern individual, a case of vanity rendering the world a vain reflection of himself, and doing so through performative language. Following the onto-logic of Hegel’s critique of the ironic individual (Schlegel), the essential failure of the ironic artwork, its stunted, aborted, unfinished aspect, is a direct, faithful translation of the impoverished, inwardly dirempted romantic “artist,” who is none other than the modern dogmatic and yet deeply skeptical individual.

I have no doubt that some contemporary scholars, steeped, as we all are, in the very culture that Hegel criticizes, will find my insistence on Hegel’s critique of individualism, in Reason and again, here, in Spirit, to be questionable or exaggerated. They might argue, quite rightly, that the modern individual and

their agency plays a crucial role in the vision of political freedom put forward in the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*. However, I would respond that we are not there yet. We are not in Hegel's presentation of Objective Spirit, as found in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, of which the *Philosophy of Right* is the pedagogical elaboration. The full, holistic vision of the State is part of Science, and it is essential to distinguish between its systematic narrative and the ladder leading to it: the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. We are climbing that ladder together.

Within the systematic narrative of Science (in the *Encyclopedia*), the individual is fully recognized as the agent of human freedom. However, that is only the case because the individual agent is comprehended within a narrative context (the actual State and its institutions of political and civil society) that lends meaning to such freedom. Once again, in Hegel, things make sense with respect to greater, more holistic, embracing horizons of discourse. The *Phenomenology* is itself such a horizon. However, because of its progressive and indeed historical structure (Spirit), it is important to take each step for what it is, without anticipating its outcome as a particular feature of the organic whole. Thus, what Hegel is presenting at this stage of Spirit, in historical terms, is a moment when modern individualism, as a worldly expression, comes to the fore.

The *Phenomenology's* argument is that both the concept and the reality of the modern, essentially free individual, are given full voice in the Enlightenment. However, the inner nature of this freedom ensures that the modern individual is existentially challenged. It is no accident that the world of Culture, as the historical context in which such individualism holds sway, should be characterized by the same challenges or oppositions (between inner transcendence and outer immanence) that are experienced by the singular, individual person. And it is no accident that the oppositions inherent in the idea of the free individual should be best expressed in the theory of mind articulated by the ultimate philosopher of the Enlightenment: Kant. The world of Culture is the historical world of such oppositions. It is a reflection of the oppositions at play within the individual himself. As such, the world is the effect of vanity, predicated by the modern, disrupted, individual subject.

Of course, we recognize individual freedom as a crucial feature of our own world. However, pace certain extreme libertarian views, such individual freedom makes sense only within a broader, holistic narrative that involves dialogical, hermeneutical difference. Hegel's *critique* of modern individualism takes it as a self-standing worldview, devoid of any grander narrative framework. His point, ultimately, is that when individualism is given full, exclusive and actual reign, the supposed difference between singular individuals, whereby they express their personal freedom, collapses into a state of indifference, which is ultimately dangerous, despotic, and perhaps even proto-totalitarian. Strictly singular, individual difference, without a meaningful context, is no difference at all.

When we observe Hegel's critique in terms of the language-world at play in the actuality of Culture, we may be horrified by our own endless chatter, demagogical judging, tweeting, carping, blogging, trolling, and so on as exercises in vanity, whereby our empty verbiage (empty, because it is pure opinion, without content other than that of our own self-positing) creates the very data-world in which it is

expressed, a world where everyone has (is?) something to say, where everyone is a self-creative "artist." Such a world is not the organic state that Hegel presents in the *Philosophy of Right* simply because the language-world of modern individualism that we find presented in Culture takes place without the state, in spite of it, behind its back, and even against it. The contemporary relevance of Hegel's critique of individualism is supported by the fact that, today, when institutions of statehood attempt to legislate any limitations, parameters, or discursive framing on our brave, new data-world, the angry and predictable response is always in the name of individual freedom, and not corporate profit. Yes, Hegel would be critical of such a world, and so should we be too.

For us, Hegelian *Phenomenologists* concerned with the bigger picture, the question arises concerning the relation between the language of vanity and vanishing words. Briefly, if the language of vanity is a form of judgment (predication) that renders vain the words that it encounters, by emptying them of meaning and reducing them to the status of empty signs, then is not the language of vanity simply carrying out the destiny of vanishing words themselves? Indeed, Hegel seems to acknowledge this worldly wisdom on the part of the vain individual in his contemporary culture: in "passing judgments," the individual is expressing "the contradiction that is present in the solid elements of the actual world [...] a contradiction which is their truth" (M526/W3, 389). Vanity thus apparently "knows how to give correct expression to each moment in relation to its opposite, in general, how to express accurately the perversion of everything" (ibid.).

It is indeed the destiny of all words to vanish. Their life is necessarily finite, by the very fact that they are invested with meaning. It bears repeating this idea which is central to my whole enterprise: in words, meaning necessarily outstrips the body/sign in which it is incarnated. The vanishing of words is therefore the hermeneutical opening where their meaning always escapes the embodied sign. Consequently, the judgments of the vain individual may be seen as hermeneutical, since they indeed acknowledge the finitude of words.

The problem is, however, twofold. First, the judgments of the vain individual actually do not let the words that they encounter speak for themselves and vanish of their own accord, where they present a meaning other than the one predicated by the vain subject. Vain individual judgment violently rips apart (*zerrisst*) the word, separating meaning from sign in a way that reminds us of the guillotine's falling blade. Indeed, the discourse that results from such an imposed, violent hermeneutical enterprise is no more meaningful than the repeated "monosyllable" of that revolutionary instrument of indifferent death. In other words, the vain exercise of individual judgment can do no more than articulate the singular individuality of the subject making the judgment. In this context, the hermeneutical result, the truth of the forcibly "disappeared" word, is no more meaningful than the punctual "here" and "now" that we discovered first in Sense-certainty.

Second, and relatedly, the vanishing that is brought about by vain judgment, in its violent hermeneutical treatment of words, goes nowhere. Such judgment may "express" the truth of words, that is, their essential vanishing, but it does so without actually comprehending such truth. "It understands very well how to

pass judgment [on the substantial word] but has lost the ability to comprehend (*fassen*) it" (M526). The ability to "comprehend" to *fassen* or to bring together in the Concept (*Begriff*), as we have seen, implies a greater narrative structure, for example, in the retrospective account of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It is not enough to simply understand that words have meaning within them, a meaning that is there *for me* and which may be extracted and endlessly interpreted by me, in a type of violent hermeneutics that is entirely arbitrary, an expression of "the pure 'I' itself" (*ibid.*) and nothing more.

The arbitrary, solipsistic aspect of vain judgment reminds us that, in it, the copula remains neutral, a lens or mirror of subjective self-reflection in the predicate. On the other hand, when the predicate is acknowledged in the (Hegelian) speculative sense, then it is fully acknowledged as more than an interpretable sign. It is seen as having its own voice, its own "counter-thrust." In this speculative articulation, the copula becomes substantially enriched with both identity and difference, making possible the onto-grammatical opening for dialogical, communal, and societal hermeneutics. It is the onto-grammatical reality of this hermeneutics that is actualized in the greater narrative structures of meaning that Hegel refers to as "positive significance" (M526/W3, 389). Conversely, in vain judgment (predication), "all content is turned into something negative" (*ibid.*), a vanishing where spilled meaning dissipates into thin air, "with no more significance than cutting of a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water" (M590/W3, 436).

Culture: Faith and Insight—Enlightenment, Superstition, and the Terror

In my discussions of Unhappy Consciousness, Reason, and Spirit, I have insisted upon the crucial feature of Hegel's view of modernity: the unreconciled opposition between the inner feeling of transcendent freedom (soul) and heteronomous worldly immanence (body), an opposition that we discovered, at the dawn of modernity, between dogmatic Stoicism and Skepticism. Onto-grammatically, in the broadest sense, this fundamental opposition is expressed in the unmediated relation between essential meaning and the linguistic sign. However, more specifically, Hegel presents their relation in terms of predication, in terms of the propositional judgment between subject and predicate. To the extent that their relation is unmediated or immediate, the continued opposition between inner meaning and outer signs takes specific forms, the forms of modern individuality that we witnessed in Reason, and the world of Culture that such disrupted individuality informs in Spirit.

In the Realm of Actuality section of Culture, we once again find ourselves in the spiritual "animal kingdom" that we first discovered in Reason, now defined in terms of a generalized culture of individual vanity, a condition of "nearly animal consciousness" (M524/W3, 388), a spiritual state of "nature" (*ibid.*), where the immediacy of the subject–predicate relation performs a world of vain verbiage.

The natural state of individualistic vanity is not obviously historical, just as neither Hobbes' nor Rousseau's idea of a state of nature is overtly historical, and neither state, once postulated, provides an inherently historical reason for

humanity to leave it. In more Hegelian terms, in order to show how the animal state of Enlightenment culture proves to be revolutionary, that is, to overturn itself temporally, we must show how the fundamental opposition within modern individuality and its world is itself historical. This, I believe, is Hegel's plan in the remaining sections leading up to "Absolute Freedom and the Terror": to show how the opposition between inner feeling and worldly immanence, which has characterized the modern world generally, takes the historical form of a radical crisis in the Enlightenment, and how this opposition, if left unmediated, brings about two figures of indifference: in France, the fundamentally failed form of the Terror; in Germany, the infinitely more successful and yet still limited form of the moral (religious) community of shared belief. I will explain this surprising coincidence below.

During the years that I have been researching and reflecting on this book, I have taken the opportunity to produce several articles based on my findings. One of these efforts deals with the sections that are now under discussion, discussing the essential, historical opposition that Hegel sees as underlying modernity but which forms a crisis in the world of the Enlightenment. In an earlier chapter, on Reason's moral law-making and testing, I promised to explore the *Pantheismusstreit*, the literary quarrel between Moses Mendelssohn and F. H. Jacobi, as fundamental to Hegel's grasp of his own time, as defined by the opposition between feeling and reasoning. Earlier, I maintained that, with respect to this quarrel, Hegel's Kant reference was not to his critical works but rather to his essay "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking." I explained that Hegel's reading of the Kant text showed that, far from reconciling the opposition at play in the quarrel, the text itself should be considered symptomatic of its contemporary dilemma. In the next sections, I would like to show how the Enlightenment references that Hegel discovers in the Kant essay are not foremost French. Rather, through an investigation into the term "Insight" (*Einsicht*) that Hegel uses in the *Phenomenology's* Culture chapter, I will show that his principal reference is indeed to the German *Pantheismusstreit* and its central issue: the opposition between faith and reason.

If indeed each figure of Spirit can be comprehended as the societal/historical embodiment of a specific performative discourse (e.g., *Antigone*, codified law, vain chatter), then, I would like to argue that the linguistic expression underlying the following sections, on "Faith and Pure Insight" and "The Struggle of the Enlightenment with Superstition," is to be found in the actual texts of the famous, well-known, culturally determinant debate between Mendelssohn and Jacobi. Let us recall that the debate was one "of letters" where the two opposed elements, as faith and reason, play themselves out in a determinant, historical moment that is essentially textual in nature. To be clear, the debate was, at least in the German world of letters, widely read at the time, discussed, and interpreted. The stakes were high since the future of the Enlightenment project itself, and the attendant gains in individual freedom of action and thought, appeared to be in jeopardy if the opposing camps of faith (religion, feeling, intuition, skepticism) and reason (dogmatism, science, Spinozism, materialism, pre-critical metaphysics) could not be reconciled. Hegel's argument in the "Faith and Pure Insight" paragraphs

seeks to show that only through speculative (Hegelian) mediation might the Enlightenment, with its dirempted culture of Kantian *Verstand*, have the resources to overcome its own oppositions.

As we have seen, in Hegel's view, it is the very culture of the Kantian understanding, with its fundamental distinction between the intuitive and the discursive, that grounds the epochal opposition. Whereas the recalcitrant *Verstand* maintains this opposition as stubbornly fixed, the speculative solution proposed by Hegel consists in showing that each self-identical pole contains the other as its essential difference, thereby fluidifying the hard dichotomy in a dynamic, dialogical way. Such speculative mediation happens through the ful-filling of the copula.

Hegel's goal is not to erase or refuse the terms of opposition that define modernity (one possible post-modern approach) but rather to mediate them through the self-differentiating copula. As we will see, this can happen only if we take the substantial predicate that human spirit has been investing with meaning, as *itself* productive of meaning, that is to say, as an onto-grammatical subject. But we're not there yet. As we will discover, this solution is *ultimately* made possible by moving beyond Spirit as we have been reading it: as the exclusively human, world-historical narrative toward self-knowledge. We will discover that the very possibility of ful-filling the copula and thorough-going speculative reconciliation involves taking into (the) account the revelatory agency of the Absolute, through the nonetheless human expressions of art, religion, and philosophy, as presented in Chapter 7 (Religion). We can say that Hegel's speculative project is not only to save modernity but, even more audaciously, to save "humanity" as the protagonist in a grand narrative of self-knowledge, through the reciprocal predicative agency of an absolute Other.

The first step is to demonstrate that in the sections on the Enlightenment in the Culture chapter, Hegel is referring not principally to French notions of Deism and utility but to the texts of the *Pantheismustreit*. In order to carry out this demonstration, I will reprise content and research from my above-mentioned work, my article in *Hegel Bulletin*, "Insight and the Enlightenment: Why *Einsicht* in Chapter 6 of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*?" (Reid, 2016), where the reader, if interested, will find the complete scholarly apparatus (i.e., footnotes) associated with some of the claims that are argued here, in the present book.

I have always found the subchapter on "Faith and Pure Insight" (M527/W3, 391)¹ particularly intriguing. While the story that it appears to tell, of the conflict between religion and reason, is hardly out of place in the *Lumières* context where it is found, framed by references to Diderot and the French Revolution, Hegel's use of the term *Einsicht* ("insight") itself has always struck me as peculiar. Why does Hegel choose the term here to describe Enlightenment reason? Why not simply use "reason" (*Vernunft*), a term that certainly fits in with the surrounding references to Deism, Encyclopaedism, French utilitarianism, Jacobinism, and so on, and which Hegel does, in fact, refer to occasionally in the section that I am discussing? Why does Hegel favor the term *Einsicht* here, I wondered. What is so specific about this form of mental activity that the term describing it finds its

way into Chapter 6 of the *Phenomenology* and nowhere else, in the same sustained manner, in the entire Hegelian œuvre?

Perhaps, one might suppose, Hegel uses the term in order to describe a specific type of subjective mental activity appropriate to the form of individual human consciousness that arises in the Culture chapter. In that case, *Einsicht* could have a precise psychological meaning, definable against the historical backdrop where it appears in the *Phenomenology*. If indeed *Einsicht* were such a feature, I further reasoned, then we might possibly find some reference to the term in the Psychology section of Hegel's *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, in his *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*. This is not the case. "Insight" is not presented among the psychological elements of mind (*Geist*) examined in *Subjective Spirit*: we find intelligence, intuition, imagination, *Phantasie*, thinking (*das Denken*), memory, feeling but no *Einsicht*. With neither a clear psychological definition nor a convincing historical-cultural reference, I found myself again left with the question, why *Einsicht*?

In fact, commentators on this section of the *Phenomenology* tend to simply take the term at face value, as a type of thinking that consciousness happens to engage in at this point in the book's narrative. The problem with this approach is that when we take the use of *Einsicht* in a strictly punctual sense, as meaningful in this one context alone, it tends to lose any broader significance, leaving it largely indistinguishable from reasoning or thinking in general. In a less systematic and rigorous thinker, one might not find this issue particularly interesting. However, in Hegel, it is hard to believe that the specific usage of the term throughout a crucial section of one of his major works could simply be idiosyncratic. To be clear, I am not saying that Hegel never uses the word elsewhere in his work. On the contrary, the everydayness of the German word *Einsicht* ensures its use in a variety of often unexceptional contexts. Indeed, one might say that it is the "common usage" quality of the word itself that makes its promotion, in the *Phenomenology*, particularly noteworthy.

Investigating the provenance of *Einsicht* in the Enlightenment setting where it appears, I thought, might help better define the specific meaning that Hegel attaches to it in Chapter 6. Historically contextualizing the term in this way might thus contribute to a clearer understanding of how the *Phenomenology*'s "Faith and Pure Insight" section is to be read. Further, since reference to *reine Einsicht* (pure insight) carries through the subsequent sections on the Enlightenment (M538–581/W3, 398–431), a better grasp of its meaning might shed new light there as well.

As I mentioned above, my earlier investigations have led me to conclude that Hegel derives his use of *Einsicht* from its use in the German Enlightenment and specifically from its appearance within the *Aufklärung*'s famous *Pantheismusstreit* between Moses Mendelssohn and Friedrich Jacobi, as well as in Kant's essay "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thought?" In other words, finding the source of the term *Einsicht* allows us to establish the centrality of the Pantheism Quarrel as performative text in the Enlightenment and, by extension, in the fundamental opposition that both determines and undermines modernity as presented in the Culture chapter.

First, I will show that Hegel generally uses the term *Einsicht* (in and outside the *Phenomenology*) in religious contexts, where the knowledge of God is at stake. The religious/epistemological issue forms the substance of the epochal *Pantheismusstreit* between Mendelssohn and Jacobi, which Hegel, I will show, had in mind. The central issue of the debate is whether we know God (aka absolute Truth) through faith (feeling) or through dogmatic reasoning. Following this, I will discuss how Kant, in his above-mentioned essay, assigns the term *Einsicht* to the foundational intuition underlying Mendelssohn's metaphysical reasoning, in a way that anticipates the rational faith postulated by his own (i.e., Kant's) moral philosophy. I will then approach the use of *Einsicht* in Jacobi, in his surprisingly celebratory reference to Spinoza's idea of the intellectual love of God, thereby stretching his own (i.e., Jacobi's) definition of faith to mean a foundational metaphysical intuition.

Comprehending *Einsicht* as a foundational intuition, in *both* Mendelssohn and Jacobi, allows Hegel to understand it as a form of "immediate knowing" that is common to both Enlightenment authors and thus to modernity itself. Consequently, *Einsicht* allows Hegel to demonstrate that the opposition between faith (intuition, feeling) and reasoning (dogmatism) is both nugatory and complicitous, since both ways of knowing are expressions of immediacy; immediacy, as we know by now, bespeaks the lack of mediating, speculative content in the predicative copula. Without such mediation, and the differentiation that it implies, the binary language and reality of modernity collapse into worldly expressions of indifference.

The religious context in which "insight" appears, when it does, in its rare occurrences in Hegel's works, is clearly stated at the beginning of the "Faith and Pure Insight" section (M528/W3, 392): "Religion—for it is obviously religion that we are talking about." Significantly, the issue that the term is associated with is not predominantly one of reason's liberation from doctrinaire positive religion, as we generally find in the *philosophes* of the French Enlightenment, but rather refers to the conflicting claims between reason and faith as mutually exclusive means of knowing God. In polemical terms, Jacobi qualifies all metaphysical reasoning as reducible to Spinozism and thus reducible to deterministic, dogmatic, materialistic nihilism, while Mendelssohn implies that Jacobi's reliance on faith is an expression of unreason and thus a nascent form of religious fanaticism (*Schwärmerei*).

In comprehending the Pantheism Quarrel as taking place between two forms of *knowing*, as Hegel points out when he recognizes that the activity of thought is a "cardinal factor in the nature of faith, which is usually overlooked" (M529/W3, 392), we see how the religious issue, where *Einsicht* is evoked, is fundamentally epistemological. The debate is not first and foremost between *atheistic* reason and religious faith, but rather between the rival approaches of thought in its quest to *know* God as the Truth. It is the shared, *absolute* object of each approach (pre-critical metaphysics and faith) that makes their rivalry all the more devastating for religion but also, as we will see, for the ethical and political vocation of philosophy. The mission of speculative *Wissenschaft* (Science) is consequently to overcome the recalcitrant exclusivity of the apparently opposed epistemological positions represented in faith and reason.

This is, of course, the theme of one of Hegel's earliest published writings, the essay *Glauben und Wissen* (1802, *Faith and Knowing*). Examining Hegel's use of *Einsicht*, as I am doing, shows how the theme is not confined to Hegel's early interests but rather should be seen as present throughout his philosophical career. In fact, as my work on his critique of Romantic irony shows, Hegel's reconciliatory mission only becomes more pressing in his mature Berlin philosophy, where, as we saw regarding his Preface to Hinrichs's *Religion*, Hegel perceives the dangerous "universal presuppositions of the time" in terms of the same opposition (between feeling and reasoning). The single-minded reliance on the "insight" of metaphysical reasoning is just as pernicious as the exclusivity of faith, not only to Science viewed as a holistic, speculative endeavor but to the world in which such knowing is meant to take place and, as I wrote above, to the project of humanity itself, as it is articulated in the Western narrative that Hegel is participating in.

Since Hegel's use of the term *Einsicht* presents it, at least initially, in clear contradistinction to faith, and therefore to the type of metaphysical reasoning championed by Mendelssohn over against Jacobi's appeal to intuitive belief, we might expect to find the term itself, as a term of art, in Mendelssohn's philosophical writings, particularly in the texts of his actual debate/correspondence with his philosophical adversary.² However, this is not the case. Mendelssohn himself does not use the term in any significant way. Where we do find the term associated with Mendelssohn's thought, however, is in an important commentary on the *Pantheismusstreit*: in Kant's short, but well-known essay of the time, entitled "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" This is where I believe Hegel discovered the term *Einsicht* associated with the reasoning of classical metaphysics, as promoted by Mendelssohn. In other words, it is Kant's use of the term in his "Orienting" essay that allows us to place it in the context of the *Pantheismusstreit* and the late *Aufklärung*, and to understand its crucial role in the deployment of the Culture chapter in Hegel's *Phenomenology*.

Kant wrote his short essay, which appeared in 1786, in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, in response to those seeking his arbitration in the *Pantheismusstreit*, and indeed the Kant text itself can be seen as an important discursive element in the debate. Kant's intervention was much anticipated and, given the prominence of the journal in which it appeared, we can assume that it was well read, including, at some point at least, by Hegel. Given Kant's stature, but also given the apparently ambiguous compromise that his *Critique* presented between reason and faith, where each is fundamentally justified in moral science, it is not surprising that both Mendelssohn's and Jacobi's camps sought his partisanship in their adversarial struggle. If Jacobi himself expected Kant's position to support his own notion of rational faith (which conflated religious faith with the axiomatic positing of empirical reality), he must have been very disappointed. While Kant's essay does condemn Mendelssohn's overarching use of uncritical, "speculative" reasoning, Kant applauds Jacobi's adversary for his unreserved promotion of reason itself, particularly in the face of contemporary expressions of "fanaticism" (*Schwärmerei*), "genius," and, ultimately, "superstition" (*Aberglaube*) (OT: 17/145),³ all positions where Jacobi might well have felt himself (unjustly) targeted. Above all, Kant's

essay concludes with a poignant plea for reason as the guarantor of freedom of thought against impending (with the death of the Enlightenment emperor Frederick the Great) censorship, and against those (like Jacobi?) who would assail reason's universal human vocation.

Despite Kant's reservations regarding Mendelssohn's overextension of reason's claims in the area of theoretical knowledge, Kant recognizes shades of his own idea of reason in Mendelssohn's promotion of the universality of sound common sense. However, according to Kant, Mendelssohn's error consists in his failing to understand that the fundamental universality of reason cannot be limited to the particular expressions of common sense but is rather to be found in reason's legislative vocation, which must orient it toward the *summum bonum*. In other words, the vocation of reason, for Kant, is ultimately practical (moral) and as such undergirds the possibility of human freedom that the Enlightenment promises.

The problem in Mendelssohn, according to Kant, was therefore that he "misunderstood" his own idea about reason being oriented by sound common sense, or, as Kant calls it, by "sound human reason" (OT: 13/140). Thus, while Mendelssohn is correct in making reason the final arbiter in all judgments, through the guiding principle of "rational insight" [*Einsicht*] (OT: 13/141), he fails to recognize the moral vocation of such insight. On Kant's reading, Mendelssohn's guiding principle remains one of theoretical reason which he mistakenly promotes in place of Kant's idea of rational faith, that is, self-legislating (universalizing) moral reason whose vocation lies beyond the theoretical realm. As Kant puts it: "By contrast, rational faith, which rests on a need of reason's use with a practical intent, could be called a postulate of reason – not as if it were an insight which did justice to all the logical demands for certainty" (OT: 14/141).

In spite of his criticism of Mendelssohn's metaphysical use of theoretical reason, Kant nonetheless cannot help but salute him for his uncompromising promotion of reason itself, even though this takes the abstract form of rational insight underlying common sense. On the other hand, the danger that Jacobi's faith, qua *Schwärmerei*, represents, according to Kant, is that even if it is directed solely against rational insight in its purely theoretical employment, it cannot help but bring harm to (moral) reason itself. This is because Jacobi does not recognize the Kantian notion of rational faith as expressed in his *Postulatlehre*. Further, Jacobi's position strikes Kant as particularly pernicious since reason is, in its self-legislative vocation, the quintessential expression of human freedom. Injury to reason is consequently an assault on self-legislation, heralding a state of "declared lawlessness in thinking" (OT: 17/145). Indeed, religious fanaticism is "another kind of faith where everyone can do for himself as he likes" (OT: 15/143). Such a state of anarchic lawlessness will necessarily bring down upon itself the heteronomy of political repression and censorship.

While it is not my aim here to explore all the possible links between Kant's OT and the sections that I am discussing from Chapter 6 of the *Phenomenology*, it is remarkable that the Kant text anticipates Hegel's move from "Faith and Pure Insight" to "the Struggle of Enlightenment with Superstition," and then to the dangerous state of lawlessness and repression we see portrayed in the "Absolute

Freedom and the Terror” section. Perhaps most remarkably, we might note that the transition, again in Chapter 6, from the theoretical issues involved in the *Pantheismusstreit* (i.e., the question of the knowledge of God through reason or through faith), to the ethical concerns in the Morality section, replays Kant’s argument about the ultimately moral orientation of reason itself. My point for now is that, within this broader context, Kant presents *Einsicht* as a kind of axiomatic intuition that is involved in both speculation and common sense (i.e., healthy human reason).

If Hegel, in the “Faith and Pure Insight” section, indeed derives the term *Einsicht* from Kant’s presentation of Mendelssohn’s position over against Jacobian faith, then we may already note that insight is more than the type of pre-critical, metaphysical reasoning normally associated with the Enlightenment. In a way, we might say that what Kant takes away from Mendelssohn is the trace of his own idea of reason, of a foundational orientation that is deeper than ratiocinating reasoning itself, an orienting that Kant refers to as *Einsicht*. In adopting the term, therefore, Hegel has already taken on its intuitional aspect, one which will thus prove related to the notion that it initially appeared opposed to: Jacobi’s faith. Indeed, the dialectical lesson that Hegel teaches in Chapter 6 consists in showing how the opposition between faith and insight is an erroneous one, to the extent that each pole can be shown to contain its other within itself. Failure to recognize this fact through the maintaining of each position as strictly opposed to the other (expressed in the next section, “The Struggle of the Enlightenment with Superstition”) brings about the two states of indifference as expressed in “Absolute Freedom and the Terror” and again at the end of Morality, in the idea of a homogeneous community of shared belief.

If Hegel is right about insight, that its intuitional aspect is actually common to both positions, then we might expect to find reference to the term in Jacobi’s texts from the *Pantheismusstreit*. Recall what we are showing: that the term *Einsicht* in Hegel denotes a kind of immediate knowing, devoid of real, differentiated, speculative content in the copula. The goal of the “Insight” section in the Culture chapter is to demonstrate that each pole of the fundamental opposition between faith and reason relies on “insight” and thus on immediate knowing. We have seen how “insight” pertains to Mendelssohn, through Kant’s essay on “Orienting”; for Mendelssohn, insight takes the form of common sense, the guiding principle of reason. Now, we must see how it occurs in Jacobi, that is, how his notion of faith can be thought of as a kind of epistemological insight.

Jacobi does use the term *Einsicht* in his *Pantheismusstreit* writings. Fittingly, he does so in a way that is itself highly ambiguous, through reference to Spinoza. Recall that Spinoza is ostensibly what the whole quarrel was about: whether Jacobi was correct in reporting the great Lessing’s “death bed” conversion to Spinozism, and thus to pantheistic atheism, which was how Spinoza’s philosophy was generally viewed at the time. Jacobi clearly shares this view, since he frankly states, in his “Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza,” that all metaphysical arguments, when coherently pushed to their conceptual limits, end up determining all of reality as finitude which is fully conditioned by material causation. Such a terminal state of

affairs is exemplified, for Jacobi, in Spinoza's completely determined Substance.⁴ The issue of Lessing's supposed Spinozism was particularly important to Lessing's closest friend and confidant, Mendelssohn.

What is surprising, however, is that Jacobi, in his own reported response to Mendelssohn, actually seems to recognize in Spinoza himself a kind of *Einsicht* that is very much akin to his own definition of faith, that is, understood as a fundamental intuition guaranteeing the reality of objective finitude and the possibility of our knowing it. Jacobi writes (to Mendelssohn), "You go further than Spinoza; for him insight was above everything" (CS: 190). And further on, "For Spinoza, insight is the best part in all finite natures, for it is the part through which each finite nature reaches beyond its finitude."⁵ The ambiguity of such a promotion of insight in Spinoza, where it becomes something akin to intellectual intuition or, indeed, faith as Jacobi himself understands it, is that it clearly flies in the face of Jacobi's ultimate statement of his "positions in the clearest terms." His six lapidary propositions begin with "Spinozism is atheism" and include: "Every avenue of demonstration ends up in fatalism [i.e. materialistic determinism]" (CS: 233–4). However, on another level, Jacobi's promotion of insight in Spinoza is very much in keeping with the rhetorical device that he employs when he writes, rather unctuously, "My dear Mendelssohn, we are all born in faith and must remain in faith" (CS: 230). For what Jacobi is claiming here is that faith grounds the possibility of all knowledge, including the empirical. Through the audacious conflation of axiomatic intuition and religious faith, Jacobi seeks to show that since they rely on intuitional insight even such Jewish metaphysicians as Spinoza and Mendelssohn are already living as Christians, whether they recognize it or not. Conversion is therefore not such a big step!

Consequently, while in associating *Einsicht* with Spinoza's philosophy it may seem that Jacobi is indeed associating it with atheistic rationalism, in fact, what Jacobi implies by the term is something altogether removed from rationalistic "demonstration." Rather, insight now appears as the universal intuition that underlies the Spinozistic system, as found in the *Ethics*' seminal Definitions, and again in the ultimate expression of the intellectual love of God, with which that work ends, and which the definitional beginning, in fact, presupposes. Briefly, for Jacobi, all that distinguishes insight from faith is simply the latter's clear recognition of its godly (Christian) source.

The ambiguity of the word *Einsicht* allows us to comprehend the point that Hegel is making in the "Faith and pure insight" section: that each side of the Pantheism Quarrel, in promoting the unilateral nature of its cause, is espousing a form of immediate, intuitional knowledge (of God) that it shares with its polar opposite. The ambiguity of "insight" is truly speculative in that each self-identical position is shown to contain its opposing difference within it. Since the binary opposition between faith and insight (aka feeling/intuition versus dogmatic reasoning) determines and undermines Enlightenment modernity, grasping the speculative nature of *Einsicht* allows us to move beyond the hard recalcitrance of the understanding (*Verstand*) or, rather, to see how the understanding subverts itself.

At the beginning of the section that I am discussing, Hegel presents both “Faith and pure insight” (M527/W3, 391) as forms of self-alienated thought, in that they each have worldly, actual instantiations to which they are at once related and opposed. In the case of faith, the positive, that is, dogmatic church, with its doctrines and dogma, appears opposed to the self-conscious inwardness of religious feeling. In the case of pure insight, the world appears as the *object* of vain, self-reflective judgments. For faith, the inwardness of thought is presented as consciousness of the unconditioned Absolute (God). In the case of pure insight, the inwardness of thought is *self*-consciousness, that is, where the self is immediately self-related. Consequently, the dialectical truth of the relation between faith and pure insight is that each contains the other within itself, a truth that is, however, available only for us, speculative thinkers.

The immediacy of both positions (faith and pure insight) means that each appears as immediately “conditioned” by its “opposite principle” (M527) but without the subsequent realization, brought about “through the movement of mediation” (*ibid.*), that each has been a form of immediate knowing. Briefly, each form of knowing will come to recognize itself in its other because it carries its other within itself. As I just mentioned, this truth is available for us but not for the forms of consciousness actually involved in the dialectic between faith and pure insight. As Hegel clearly puts it, the “fact” that the “disrupted consciousness” presented here “is implicitly the self-identity of pure consciousness [i.e. immediate knowing]” is “known to *us* but not to [the disrupted consciousness] *itself*” (M527). In other words, if “we” Hegelian philosophers may share the truth, that is, that faith and insight are two forms of immediate knowing that mediate themselves, each through the other, in order to lead to a greater, speculative truth, it is because we are able to look back and grasp how the commonality of *Einsicht* underlies the oppositions present in the Enlightenment. Having established this truth at the outset of “Faith and pure insight,” albeit in a rather compressed fashion, Hegel now presents their dialectical relationship as it is experienced by the forms of consciousness themselves, thus replaying a juxtaposition of perspectives that is witnessed throughout the *Phenomenology*.

First, pure insight, as “self-conscious Reason” or infinite self-reflection, cannot help but universalize itself. Building on his earlier definition of Reason, at the beginning of Chapter 5 of the *Phenomenology* (M231/W3, 179), Hegel now writes, “pure insight is not only the certainty of self-conscious Reason that it is all truth: it knows that it is” (M536/W3, 397). As reason, pure insight is “thus the spirit that calls to every consciousness: be for yourselves what you are in yourselves—reasonable” (M 537).

The universality of reason is certainly a feature of the French *Lumières*, in the essential form of a self-conscious, rational “I” that is truly Cartesian, that is, common to each and every “I.” Indeed, pure insight is conceived as “an insight for everyone” (M539/W3, 399). Individual, infinite judgment ($I = I$) “is resolved into the universal insight” (M540), a fact witnessed in the missionary zeal of the early *Encyclopédiste* project but which also may be celebrated in Mendelssohn’s unreserved promotion of metaphysical reason. It is crucial to grasp, however, that

the universal vocation of Enlightenment reason, as represented by pure insight, is only possible in that it “manifests its own peculiar activity in opposing itself to faith” (M540/W3, 399). Or again, “the peculiar object against which pure insight directs the power of the concept is faith” (M538).

The essential opposition between faith and pure insight (qua Enlightenment reason) is further radicalized in the subsequent section, on the “Struggle of the Enlightenment with Superstition.” The spread of pure insight is likened to a pestilential vapor, one which infects the very “marrow of spiritual life,” a state of affairs where any “struggle against it betrays the fact that infection has occurred” (M544/W3, 402). To the extent that reason, by definition, knows itself to be “all truth,” it posits itself as omnipresent. Nonetheless, however, such a universal expansion still remains essentially “antagonistic to the content of faith” (M545), a remark accompanied by a reference to Diderot but which, again, could easily describe Mendelssohn’s position against Jacobi’s promotion of axiomatic Christian faith. However, recall that the binary opposition between faith and knowing is for Enlightenment consciousness itself. For us, as we have seen, their oppositional nature already betrays their *essential* complicity. Each position makes sense only to the extent that it positions itself against its other, which it therefore carries within itself as determinant.

The still unresolved conflict, in the context of the *Lumières*, is expressed in the ethic of utility. The quality of usefulness, which saturates all worldly objectivity, results from the internal contradiction that we observed at the beginning of the “Faith and Pure Insight” section (M527/W3, 391), where each position expressed the contradiction between the positive recognition of actuality and the negative (internalized) relation to it. In terms of utility, this means that things are both what they are “in-themselves” and what they are “for-another” (M560/415), for to be *essentially* (in-itself) for-another is to be useful. On an absolute level, fully generalized, utility brings about the “abomination of the Enlightenment’s negative attitude toward belief” (M562/W3, 416), which posits Absolute Being as the vacuous *Être suprême* (ibid., significantly, in French in the text), and the Panglossian (Leibnizian, Mendelssohnian?) position that “everything in its immediate existence [is] good.” A wisdom, writes Hegel, “particular to the Enlightenment and which seems to faith to be undiluted platitude and the confession of platitude” (ibid.).

However, faith itself is distorted by the evacuation of worldly spirit at the hands of its adversary, Enlightenment reason qua pure insight. “Enlightenment distorts all the moments of faith, changing them into something different from what they are in it” (M563/W3, 417). Specifically, the Enlightenment assault on positive (dogmatic) religion has left faith without objective content. As such, it is relegated to the realm of empty feeling and “sheer yearning, its truth an empty beyond” (M573/W3, 423), a position recognizable in Jacobi’s promotion of personal faith as the essence of (Christian) religion, although perhaps also in certain aspects of pre-Revolutionary Jansenism.

The subchapters on insight and faith, which lead up to the apocalyptic vision of “Absolute Freedom and the Terror,” offer no reconciliation between the two ways

of thinking, no recognition of their common root in pure, unmediated thought. Such a speculative realization will have to wait, and will be brought to light only through the final chapters of the *Phenomenology* (Religion and Absolute Knowing). For now, the recalcitrant, obstinate opposition between faith and reason remains perverse (*verkehrt*): “Just as pure insight has failed to recognize itself and has denied itself in faith generally, so too in these moments, [faith] will behave in an equally perverse manner” (M551/W3, 408).

It is precisely this reciprocal perversity that collapses into Revolutionary Terror, a moment characterized, above all by the evacuation of objective reality, by “the fury of destruction” (M589/435), where “all social groups or classes which are the spiritual [*geistigen*] spheres [...] are abolished” (M585/433). Even here, in the ruins of the *ancien régime*, the vestiges of insight and faith remain stubbornly opposed, like two punch-drunk boxers hanging together in exhausted adversity through the final rounds: “pure insight is [now] the gazing of itself into itself [...] the [vain] essence of all actuality” (M583/W3, 431), while, conversely, faith is reduced to “the exhalation of a stale gas” (M586/W3, 433). While the French *Lumières* narrative of the antagonism between faith and reason offers a cautionary tale about the dangers of maintaining their unilateral positions unreconciled, the above reference to Mendelssohn, Jacobi, and Kant adds a deeper, speculative dimension to the antagonism, one which allows us to discover their common root in immediate knowing and the conceptual necessity of mediation.

Following the narrative arc of the Culture chapter in the *Phenomenology*, in light of our reading of *Einsicht* as immediate (unmediated) knowing, we see how the danger posed in the Enlightenment resides in the modern inability to resolve the issues at stake in the Pantheism Quarrel, leaving two unreconciled, unilateral, and dogmatically opposed attitudes, between (calculative, utilitarian) reason and radical faith, which takes the form of superstition or religious fanaticism. The exclusivity of these positions leads to the evacuation of essential reality, the ground upon which real freedom must take place, leaving only sentimental yearning for absent essence as an “empty Absolute Being,” on one hand, and material utilitarianism, “the lack of selfhood in the thing that is useful” (M573/W3, 423–4), on the other. Onto-grammatically, we are again left with a world of empty signs, open to alien, unilateral predication, devoid of “selfhood” or grammatical subjectivity. Indeed, the merely *useful* thing is entirely determinable by arbitrary, subjective purposes and predications.

The immediacy of both forms of apparently opposed knowing bespeaks their need for mediation and such mediation must be carried out by each opposing pole recognizing itself in the other. This outcome implies that each pole must not simply take its opposite as an empty, determinable predicate/sign. Each onto-grammatical subject must recognize the status of its predicate as not only a determinable substance but also as a subject full of meaning. The substantial sign is now a meaningful word, one which vanishes in the counter-thrust of its own predicative agency. Specifically, in the context of modernity, as Hegel presents it in Culture, immediate feeling (faith, intuition) must recognize that, as foundational

intuition, it has predicated itself into the agency of dogmatic reasoning that it stood opposed to. This newfound subjective agency is now operational and active within the mechanistic, fatalistic immanence that Jacobi had previously likened to Spinozistic substance (as pure sign). On the other hand, dogmatic, metaphysical reasoning must recognize that it is essentially based on a form of fundamental intuition that is akin to the "faith," to which it stood opposed; in doing so, metaphysical reasoning comes to see that what appeared as the empty Deist sign of an absent God (substance) now speaks to it in words that it can recognize.

The truth of the reconciliation is "speculative," in the Hegelian sense, because each pole understands its true identity as containing the difference of the other. Each pole is both subject and predicate to the other. In onto-grammatical terms of the copula, where the mediation takes place as real content, this means that the actual process of knowledge can now really happen, knowledge that indeed involves both intuition and reasoning. As I have been maintaining throughout the book, such *real* knowledge creation is hermeneutically open, dialogical, and communal/societal, and is so by the very fact that it involves the actual interplay between identity and difference. Such a speculative outcome stands in stark counterdistinction to the Terror, where, significantly, Hegel presents the etiolated reality of indifference in linguistic terms. It is a world that "cannot achieve anything positive, either [in the field of] general works of language or of reality [...] of laws and general institutions of conscious freedom" (M588/W3, 434–5). The indifferent world of the Terror is one where "the actual destruction of the actual organization of the world" (M590/W3, 436) has been completed. The guillotine speaks its onto-grammatical language, in "monosyllables," iterating a linguistic reality where words are arbitrarily put to death, where meaning is divorced from their signs as heads are severed from bodies.

In fact, we may recognize here the same dynamic that we discovered in the relation between Stoicism and Skepticism, where the former represented an expression of dogmatic substantiality and the latter, a form of deep subjective negativity. Just as the lack of reconciliation between these ancient, unilateral forms of consciousness produced a state of Roman indifference (re-played in the tragic oppositions of *Antigone* and its outcome in juridical personhood and comedy), here, in the modern context of the Pantheism Quarrel, the lack of reconciliation produces the in-difference of the Terror. In each case, it is binary, tragic difference that proves itself to be the motor of indifference, devoid of any real mediation. In fact, in the opposition between faith and (dogmatic) reasoning, we can say that the immediacy that Hegel assigns to each pole means that each turns its back on the other, tries to jealously guard its own subjective character without even acknowledging the real existence of its opponent; their mutual difference is a mutual indifference. Of course, we know that as subjects each must predicate itself in order to *be* a subject. In doing so, each recognizes the other as a determinable sign. Hegel asks us to take the next step, to acknowledge the other as a subject and thus, as possessing a meaning that goes beyond itself. Briefly, the other is not only substance/predicate but subject.

The feature of indifference has similarly informed particular moral figures that we have previously visited in the *Phenomenology*, in the forms of undifferentiated communities of shared belief. We first saw such a feature arise near the end of Unhappy Consciousness, where a primitive moral community arose, along with the figure of the individual, arbitrary mediator, who stands in for the speculative copula. Again, in Reason, a uniform moral/ethical community appeared following the section on Reason's legislating and testing of moral laws, where a community of shared custom was presented. Later still, in the Spirit's "Ethical Order," we are introduced to the world of undifferentiated Roman personhood. We may note that these communities of indifference directly follow presentations of tragic difference, of difference between the opposing, unreconciled poles that characterize Hegelian "modernity": in Unhappy Consciousness, between inner freedom/transcendence and outer immanence; in Reason, between the heart and the way of the world; in the Greek world of tragedy (the birth of modernity as the end of Classical Greek unicity), between the laws of the hearth and those of the state.

Following this onto-logic, we can expect to find a figure of undifferentiated moral community as the outcome of Culture and the bipolar character that we explored through our investigation into insight. This is precisely how we should understand the section on Morality: as the presentation of the world-historical (spiritual) figure of the undifferentiated moral community that arises from the binary opposition between faith and reason, specifically the Protestant community of shared belief, the *Gemeinde*. The undifferentiated character of this communal configuration is expressed linguistically, in the monosyllabic pronunciation of "the reconciling Yea," a punctual iteration that echoes earlier beats that we have heard: "here," "now" and the dull thud of the guillotine's blade. Here, in Spirit, the indifferent reality performed by the "Yea" is expressed in the immediacy of the self-identical "I = I," which "poses the certainty of itself [as] God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge" (M671/W3, 493).

This outcome may appear, to some, as a happy ending, as the long anticipated realization of the "I that is we" that we witnessed far earlier, in the first presentation of Self-consciousness (M177/W3, 144), now finally realized as a figure of human community, hundreds of pages later, in Spirit. However, our past explorations of moral communities have shown us that they are all limited by the very character that makes them "communities": their lack of real differentiation, their character of indifference, which makes them, regardless of their moral intentions to the good, precarious, and often dangerous societal configurations, open to arbitrary and even fascistic forms of superstition and fanaticism.

If the community that appears at the end of Morality is truly an expression of spirit, then it must have a worldly and historical presence. I believe this to be the contemporary (for Hegel) idea of the community of shared feeling, whether that feeling be harmlessly pietist or dangerously nationalist, or, most likely, a combination of both, since the indifference of such a community makes it inherently unstable and arbitrary in its ideological adherence. I have examined the Hegelian resistance to communities of shared belief in my book *The Anti-*

Romantic as an aspect of Hegel's critique of Schleiermacher. In a word, Hegel clearly sees the assassination of Kotzebue by the fanatical, nationalistic theology student Sand in this light. For now, I will leave my reader, at this point in our narrative, with the idea that the homogeneous, indifferent moral community is, for Hegel, the German equivalent of French Revolutionary Terror. This assertion will be particularly impertinent to those who see the end of the Morality chapter, and the "Yea" of reconciliation, as the "real" (happy) end of the *Phenomenology*.

Of course, today, in the still-early twenty-first century, with the memory of the last century's ideological horrors still relatively fresh in our collective mind, along with more recent examples of fanatical, genocidal pogroms and terrorist extremisms, Hegel's point about the dangerous instability of homogeneous communities should be easily comprehensible. Such danger can be presented in linguistic terms. Indeed, communities of shared belief, that is, based on some common feeling, no longer require words at all. As was the case in Hegel's presentation of the Terror, where there are no longer any "works of language," the homogeneous community's only linguistic reality is an impoverished one: the resounding "Yea!" of shared identity or the solipsistic, self-reflective expression of "the I that is We," ultimately reducible to "I = I." Such linguistic performances are devoid of any speculative ambiguity simply because, in each, the copula is either nonexistent or empty. Both within and without these communities of undifferentiated identity, no one dares to be different, and with good reason.

Later, I will argue that what the Religion chapter is intended to do is to introduce real organic differentiation into the uniform moral community. As we will see, this can happen only when the human onto-grammatical subject, fully realized in the moral community of shared selfhood, recognizes real, mediating content that is beyond *itself*. Substance (in all its Spinozistic weight) must be shown to be subject; that is, the substantial predicate must be shown to be subject. However, with this move, we also must recognize our own (human) status as not unilaterally subject but always also as predicate. In doing so, we acknowledge ourselves as words whose meaning is greater than us. As we will see in the Religion chapter, for this speculative turn to take place, we will require absolute agency in the form of revelation, the knowledge of which implies the recognition of the past and present forms of such agency within the human expressions of art, religion, and philosophy. It is these revelatory forms of absolute spirit that will provide the missing content, the actual mediation that immediate expressions of insight aspire to. I will show how such content is essentially linguistic in nature, taking place in the discursive forms that are introduced in Chapter 7 (Religion). However, first I want to explore in more detail the forms of language in the Morality chapter and how they lead to a community of undifferentiated identity. Such a community is the final word in strictly human agency, the actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of spirit as it strives endlessly for completion and truth in the real, endlessly modern world. My point is that the narrative fulfilment carried out in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* requires the mediation between absolute and human agencies, instantiated in the essentially hermeneutical contents (copulas) of art, religion, and speculative philosophy.

Spirit as Morality

In the *Phenomenology*, fear of death dissolves the hard, fixed oppositions of theoretical reasoning, which take place under the sign of the Kantian *Verstand*, thus bringing about new figures of morality. We witnessed this earlier, for example, in the Reason chapter, when the hard oppositions in Observing Reason were fluidified by the fear of fateful natural death experienced by the pleasure-seeker, bringing about the moral figures of law-making and testing. Earlier still, in Self-consciousness, the slave's fear of death brought about the morally ambiguous figure of Unhappy Consciousness. At the end of Culture, "the fear of death" has "entered men's hearts" "as their absolute master" (M593-4/W3, 438), in the historical form of Revolutionary Terror.

Terror has fluidified the recalcitrant oppositions of the Enlightenment that we visited in the paradigmatic theoretical, epistemological opposition of the Pantheism Quarrel. The resultant moral figure is now Morality itself. In other words, Hegel uses the fear of death to make the transition between the theoretical and moral aspects of knowing, the great divide present at Hegel's time, in both Kantian and Fichtean philosophy. In both these transcendental idealists, the limits of theoretical knowledge make possible the freedom required for moral science. The latter begins where the former ends. On the other hand, for Hegel, knowledge is immediately complicit in morality through the very fact that freedom *is* self-knowledge: to be free is to know oneself as free. And freedom is the essence of morality.

Hegel's speculative, holistic view of Science does not admit binary limits or barriers. The final goal is to show that the (theoretical) True and the (moral) Good must not be held apart, since they have the same content (aka the Idea or freedom), and are united "like sisters" (W1, 235) in the form of the Beautiful. The Beautiful is finally a narrative form, one dependent upon words. Comprehending this form and how its words come together to constitute it, that is the subject of the book you are reading, whose conclusion, and I may as well reveal it now if I haven't already, is that the most beautiful form is speculative Science itself, in the lively, performative discourse of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*.

In earlier chapters, I have repeated the assertion, perhaps my Hegelian mantra, that the figures presented in the *Phenomenology* derive their meaning from greater narrative structures in which they take place. I have presented this crucial element in terms of "having been," the present perfect (*das Perfekt*) linguistic tense. It is within greater narrative structures that we understand how that which "has been" has meaning. I have associated this grammatical tense with the idea of vanishing words, whose meaning spills out beyond them, to be captured in greater dialogical frameworks. To offer a shockingly banal example: the magnets on my fridge are meaningful only because they denote that I have been to the places represented, that they take place within the narrative structure of my family and potentially have meaning for anyone opening my fridge and "reading" them in the context of our home. The idea of greater narrative structures providing the horizon of meaning for discreet content is a feature of phenomenology generally, even in its contemporary practice.

In approaching the Morality chapter, we might be excused for wondering how it is meant to provide a greater narrative structure for what has gone on earlier. Morality tends to be understood as an individual question. This is certainly how we encountered it earlier, in the Reason chapter, where actual moral goodness was the challenge experienced by the individual over against the morally resistant world.

The question of framework may be approached this way: we are now in the province/chapter of Spirit, which I have presented as the world-historical manifestations of mind, in a narrative whose protagonist is "humanity." If we look at Morality this way, as the final moment of Spirit (the next moment is Religion), then we should see it as the final historical expression of humanity itself. According to the narrative logic that I have been presenting, where greater forms make sense of their content in terms of what "has been," then we should see Morality in this light, not as an individual question but as one involving the project of humanity as protagonist. Further, the scope and breadth of Morality, within Spirit, must be such as to constitute the "last word" of this project, a framework that is absolute, in the terminal sense of the word. In fact, the absolute dimension of morality is perhaps already available to us through the very idea of "the Good," as a maximum. More concretely, however, we can say that Morality, in Chapter 6, is thoroughly informed by where it came from: the previous chapters on the Enlightenment whose principal and defining theoretical question was the existence of God.

In other words, Morality, as it now appears, within the human, historical narrative of Spirit is no longer just an individual question of goodness, as we saw in Reason, but one that involves humanity with the very possibility of godliness. As well, as an absolute narrative framework, Morality must "look back" and make sense of everything that has happened before. This is a heavy charge. Fortunately, we have Kant to help us, providing a resource without which the chapter would make no sense at all.

In each of the previous figures of Spirit that we have visited, I have identified an actual, performative linguistic expression that provides the content for that form. Recall that Spirit, as presenting historical, human instances of dialogical, hermeneutical community, is built around shared discursive content that involves the interplay, in the copula, between subject and predicate. The discourses of Spirit take place in vanishing words, even when these discourses present us with problematic, incomplete, or erroneous takes on the copula, where the speculative interplay is not fully carried out. For example, the discourse of tragedy is both the real dialogical discourse of the Greek city and the tragic difference that characterizes and limits it. The language of vanity, through Goethe's translation of *Rameau's Nephew*, characterizes and *performs* the real world of late Enlightenment as that of modern individualism. According to this ontological grammar, the language of Morality takes place in Kant's actual writings, particularly those presenting his view of moral science. Kant's writings stand to the Morality chapter as Sophocles' work stands to the Greek world.

The problem is that the Kantian reference is often understood, once again, as an expression of individual morality, whereas for Hegel, and for us, the actual texts

of Kantian morality are presented as a world-historical moment, one in which humanity qua spirit is clearly the protagonist, and a moment that “looks back” on morality itself as the past and present struggle between human freedom and heteronomous nature. In universalizing morality to all reason-possessing beings, Kant has assigned it to humanity generally. And in seeing morality as the struggle between free determinacy and Nature, Kant shows us that this is what spirit, in its formation (Culture, *Bildung*), *has always been* (*das Perfekt*) about. The whole of human history has been about overcoming natural determinacy, about inscribing freedom into nature and, reciprocally, about the liberation of humanity from natural determinacy. In these terms, we may understand Morality as a culminating narrative within Spirit.

While Kant necessarily presents his moral science in individual terms, of duty, will, and the categorical imperative, because these elements are comprehended within the context of “science” and “law,” they are meant, by him, to be universally applicable to humanity (as reason-bearing beings). While the categorical imperative is indeed intended to be helpful for each individual (as free and reasonable), what it says expresses the entire project of humanity: the projected harmony between human freedom and nature: the summum bonum.

As moral law, this project takes the form of an “as if”: act as if the principle of your action, by an effort of your will alone, could be legislated into a universal law of nature. The imperative form of the moral law presents the goal of the human project as a postulate. As such, the harmony or happiness that humanity aspires to must always remain a Beyond, the subject of an “ought,” as we saw in the Reason chapter. However, here, in the holistic narrative of Spirit, the “ought” is not merely a matter of the individual in her moral struggle with the world. The moral “ought” is (*and always has been*) the word of Spirit, of humanity in its project of self-liberation against and through otherness. Consequently, the “last word” of Morality is the human “certainty” of the moral postulate, that is, of the intuited harmony between freedom and Nature, briefly: of happiness. Of course, the actual accomplishment of such harmonic happiness, the carried out *truth* of the “ought,” must remain a postulate, and, as such, the constantly deferred object of endless striving.

Within the context of Hegelian spirit, the real-world instantiation of such harmony can therefore take place only within communal expressions of the “ought” itself, that is, in forms of certainty rather than truth. Recall that the subtitle of Morality is “Spirit That Is Certain of Itself” (M596). Moral communities are those of shared feeling or certainty, harmonious only in their communal and yet endless striving for a Beyond that is always out of reach but always immediately “felt.” It is my contention that the reality of such endless striving is what Hegel means by “actuality” (*Wirklichkeit*), in general: the highest form of human reality, not bad, certainly better than states of nature, but never complete, condemned to an endless quest for anticipated harmony and happiness. The human narrative of spirit can be completed, perfectly accomplished (*Vollkommene*) only by bringing to bear a greater framework still, one that involves the Absolute itself, as the agency of revelation.

In the onto-grammatical terms buried and yet ever-present within the *Phenomenology's* speculative discourse, and which I have been discovering and exploring, we can say the following: Morality tells us that what "has been" should be grasped as the vanishing words of the human narrative. Their meaning takes place in the sentence where nature has been taken, in different forms, as the sign/predicate invested by the human onto-grammatical subject. This is the ongoing story of morality, a story made present and universal through the texts of Kantian moral science, performed in spirit. According to this story, nature, as sign, has always been the "body," the "substance" that humanity, in all its spiritual strivings, has been endlessly determining and signifying, not only morally but theoretically as well. In Morality we come to grasp what Spirit has always been about: humanity's self-liberation from nature *through the liberation of nature* (now reborn as spirit). However, the "liberation of nature" means taking it as a *word* and not simply as a sign.

Kantian morality has shown us that the binary terms of spirit's sentence are freedom (qua subject) and necessity/nature (qua predicate). Now, we must come to understand this sentence speculatively, that is, that the substantial body/sign that has been predicated as natural otherness should now be taken as a word, that the substance/predicate/body is also a subject. For Hegel, this becomes apparent only when we understand the natural predicate as "having been," as having been all the determinations with which it has been invested by thought. I cannot stress enough that it is completely against the Hegelian narrative to suppose that nature is, *in itself and immediately*, the expressive agent of freedom. That is Schelling, not Hegel.

However, now that we recognize, through the Morality chapter, the subjectivity of the predicated substance, as word, that is, how humanity has always been about overcoming and spiritualizing nature, we are able to concentrate on the story of the absolute substance's predicative agency. Such predicative agency is necessary for the elaboration of the grand speculative sentence that is Science, with which the *Phenomenology* will close. The absolute agency of substance is recounted in the Religion chapter, through the revelatory narrative that first takes the form of art and whose first objects are entirely natural. Briefly, the first words of the newly predicative substance are formed from nature itself, the object against which, as Morality teaches us, human freedom has always been struggling. Now, *having been* fully predicated or determined, Nature has something to say. And it is no accident that, through art, it speaks to us in a language that we humans understand.

I will explore this revelatory dimension further, at the outset of Chapter 7 (Religion). For now, I want to show, in more detail, how Morality should be read as the last chapter of the essentially human odyssey, and the agency of what is generally called and what Kant refers to as reason: the ongoing, never-ending story of humanity's subjective determination of the natural predicate/body/sign. At the end of the Spirit chapter, having grasped the truth of this story, we will come to acknowledge the predicate/body/sign as embodying all that it has been predicated as. Then, determined as a vanishing word, the predicated substance's meaning overflows for us, speaking back to us in a revelatory verb.

Throughout the present examination of the *Phenomenology*, I have considered Hegel's different and various articulations of "law" as stand-ins for mediation between subject and predicate. Generally, in law, Hegel shows that the hard-and-fast rule that it lays down is inherently ambiguous, that what was initially subject can just as easily be considered predicate and vice versa. Examples that I have repeated: in Force and Understanding, the laws of force can express either the inner determination of the outer or the outer determination of the inner. In the spiritual reality of Antigone's world, the laws of the hearth are either determined *by* or determinate *of* the laws of the state. In our past investigations of law, we have also seen how the ambiguity that Hegel brings to light precedes a higher, speculative, and thus hermeneutical reality that is brought about in the copula; such speculative reality first takes the form of a community of shared meaning. The same dynamic is at play in Morality, where the inherent ambiguity of moral law will bring about the moral community of shared belief with which the chapter ends.

Although the term "law" does not often appear in the Morality section, Hegel clearly has moral law in view here, as we see in M620 (M3, 456), when he juxtaposes the laws of nature with "the moral law," in terms of "the highest good." In other words, in Morality, we find that moral law, in the Kantian sense of self-legislating free will, in its opposition to the laws of nature, will prove as ambiguous as other legal expressions that we have visited. Here, as mentioned above, the opposing terms are ultimately freedom and nature. The moral view of the world "consists in the relation between the absoluteness of morality and the absoluteness of Nature" (M600/W3, 443). The ambiguity that moral law brings to light is contained in its presupposition of nature as an absolutely alien predicate/sign/body, which is "completely devoid of independence and essential being" (M600). Such a presupposition is inherently contradictory because, following Kant, the essential freedom of the moral law is *necessarily* opposed to the heteronomous laws of nature.

Indeed, moral law takes the form of duty and duty demands that moral law be carried out into the world (i.e., into nature), which is governed by a completely opposed set of (natural) laws. While moral duty seeks to carry its freedom into the world, its very freedom is dependent upon the heteronomy of that against which it struggles. Moral freedom is *bound* to free itself from that which it depends upon as a condition of its freedom. So, we can say that moral freedom is actually dependent upon that which "is completely devoid of independence," nature. The onto-grammatical result is that what was predicate/body/sign (nature) may now to be understood as subject. As Hegel writes, at the beginning of the Morality section: "The moral view of the world contains the development of the moments which are present in this relation of such completely conflicting presuppositions" (M600).

The Morality section thus plays out a series of conflicts that are inherent in (Kantian) morality and which are articulations of the fundamental conflict between freedom and nature, that is, as I maintained above, the fundamental opposition that has always been at play throughout Spirit and its history (i.e., freedom of mind vs. natural necessity). In the Morality section, these conflicts arise between,

for example, the universality of moral duty and individual enjoyment (M602/W3, 444); between the purpose of (free) morality and (necessary, conditioned) happiness (M602); between reason and sensuous (natural) impulses (M603); between the presence of the moral "task" which "simply must *be*" (my emphasis) and the necessity for it to remain "in the dim remoteness of infinity" as a postponed "goal" (M603). All these contradictions are conveyed, as I wrote above, by the very "ought" of the moral law itself (M603, and again in M613/W3, 452).

Hegel, inspired by Kant's *Postulatlehre* (theory of postulates), presents the "ought" of moral law in terms of two postulates. The first refers to the purposiveness of the world itself, to "the final purpose of the world," which is the harmony of "[free] morality and objective nature" (M604/W3, 447). The second postulate assigns the same purpose not to the world but to "self-consciousness," in its own "harmony of morality and sensuous will." The first takes place in the "form of implicit being." The second, "in the form of being-for-itself" (*ibid.*), which, in Hegel-speak, means self-conscious freedom. I take the second postulate to express moral law in terms of the onto-grammatical subjectivity of the subject (self-conscious freedom) in its predication of objective nature as sign. The first postulate (on the purposiveness of nature) presents the opposite movement: the objective world itself (i.e., nature) is considered to be the subjective agent that predicates the moral individual as sign. Each moment, taken as its own postulate, appears "in its abstract distinctiveness" (M604), the same unilateral exclusivity that, generally, we have seen in law and its ambiguous mediation, where subject and predicate are ambiguously, although not yet reciprocally, determinant.

In M604, Hegel clearly enunciates the ambiguous relation between the two postulated purposes of morality, and ultimately between freedom and nature, in terms of anticipated but still absent mediation. "What connects, as middle term, these postulated two extreme final purposes is the movement of actual conduct itself" (M604). This actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) is presented in clearly speculative terms, bespeaking the real identity of identity and difference, of true reciprocity, where "each [appears] as the other of the other" (M604). It is my (repeated) contention that the "actuality" in question is the moral community of shared feeling and that what is above-all shared is the certainty, the *feeling* that true harmony and happiness lie Beyond, the object of infinite and infinitely postponed progress.

Writ large, the second sub-section of Morality "*Verstellung*," translated as "Dissemblance and Duplicity" by Miller (M616/M3, 453), but which could also be translated as "misrepresentation," to capture its juxtaposition with *Vorstellung* ("representation," as I translate it, M631/W3, 463, which is lost in the translation, as "objective idea"). "Representation" is essentially linguistic, as we will see in the Religion chapter. Here, in Morality, the question is one of moral judgment, and judgment, as we have hopefully established by now, is itself a language act that involves the subject's onto-grammatical predication through the copula. In "*Verstellung*," Hegel shows how moral judgment (i.e., predication) is essentially duplicitous or a *misrepresentation*. This is the case because of the fundamental dilemma that is explored in the Morality chapter: between subjective freedom and nature conceived as an un-free not-I (M620–621/W3, 456). All the contradictions

that we see arising from the moral law, for example, how pure duty breaks down into specific duties, how the pure will is determined by natural inclination, how free moral action must carry itself out in deterministic nature, and so on, all these contradictions are inherent in the linguistic act of judgment itself. Why? For the same reason that the moral law is ambiguous in its postulated relation between the free will and nature. Indeed, as we saw, this relation, expressed in the “ought,” presents itself as a harmony of which it is immediately certain, and yet infinitely deferred. Moral judgment is onto-grammatically ambiguous. It does not say what it means or mean what it says. Its linguistic representations are misrepresentations.

To the extent that the judgment form is not understood speculatively, it necessarily misrepresents what it seeks to represent. This is the case because the copula, as devoid of real, speculative content, becomes the empty medium or mirror for self-reflection. The act of judgment is one of vain self-representation in the predicate. However, this latter is “placed apart,” held “separate” (M631) and displaced or misrepresented by the subject as something other, against which it must struggle. Hegel qualifies this action of “holding apart” as “hypocrisy” (*Heuchelei*) (M631), a term that has a technical significance, which we saw earlier, in our discussion of romantic vanity. And it is no accident that we find the term here, again, at the end of Spirit, because we are dealing with the same actuality that we arrived at in Reason: the actuality of modernity, as defined by Kantian *Verstand* and the essential opposition that it instantiates between inner feeling and dogmatic reasoning in the form of judging. In moral judgment, we are confronted with this fundamental contradiction: the onto-grammatical subject is supposedly pure and good, and must be so in order to judge; however, his judgment is nothing other than a *self*-predication and as such is necessarily “bad,” that is, the imposition of his particular selfhood into the world, getting mixed up in all the natural particularities of the world that it judges. There is simply no way for the moral subject to judge without traducing itself in its very act of judgment.

Grammatically, the problematic, contradictory relation between subjective freedom and natural necessity, which Hegel presents paradigmatically in the Morality chapter in terms of the opposed laws of morality and nature (cf. particularly M619-21/W3, 455–6), is a question of the predicative relation between the subject and empty linguistic signs. The predication of meaning must take place in and through signs. However, signs seem to obey their own “laws.” They appear as naturally (immediately) presented to us, ripe for predication and yet never *entirely* given over to it. Signs always maintain a degree of natural otherness. They are determined by “laws” of usage that escape us. Grammatically, in moral judgment, and indeed in any predicative judgment, the subjective meaning is always traduced by the signs that it must inhabit in order to make words. Subjective meaning can never be absolutely instantiated; it can never mean what it says but always misrepresents itself.

This is, of course, a feature of language generally, and certainly a feature of what I have been calling “vanishing words” and their inherently hermeneutical character: the fact that words never convey “pure” or definitive significance, the fact that they never entirely “mean what they say and say what they mean.” We

understand this ambiguity as a stand-in for hermeneutical openness and it is just such openness that hypocrisy forestalls. Hypocrisy “holds apart” the two poles of the grammatical opposition between subject and predicate, condemning the latter to the fixed status of arbitrary, empty body/sign. That is why Hegel writes, at the end of “*Verstellung*,” “the scornful rejection of that misrepresentation (*Verstellung*) would be itself the first expression of hypocrisy” (M631). Hypocrisy forestalls the vanishing quality of words, the actual ambiguity that misrepresentation implies.

Consequently, the hypocritical refusal of ambiguity is not just a personal affair, and the duplicity of moral judgment is not simply a problem for normative ethics. Rather, because it shuts out ambiguity and hermeneutical openness, hypocritical judging becomes a political/societal problem. The only communal form that it proves itself capable of embodying is the self-identical, tribal community of shared feeling. As we have seen, such communities are, for Hegel, to be taken as protagonists in modern actuality, to the extent that their shared feeling is one of yearning and striving for an essential Beyond, whether conceived in religious terms or as a national calling, a racial destiny, and so on.

In describing “law” as a stand-in for mediation, because of the essential ambiguity between its terms, we must not forget that real mediation involves something more, that is, real content in the form of vanishing words, something to be read, listened to, and taken into account. Again, we must wait for the next chapter, on Religion, in order to grasp the nature of such content. There, we will see that differentiating otherness, the condition for content within the copula, requires the subjective agency of a substantial predicate that is radically Other. The Religion chapter will reveal to us the *archè* of otherness itself, as the fundamental condition for a differentiated world of meaning and hermeneutical openness. For now, in the actuality of the present, defined as the contradictory interplay between moral law (thanks to Kant) and the laws of nature, cemented in opposition by hypocritical judgment, there is “no filling and no positive [i.e. written] content, no world” (M633/W3, 464). Instead, in “moral” (i.e., modern) actuality we have, “merely an insincere play of alternation [between] these two determinations” (ibid.).

Morality and Conscience (M632/W3, 464)

The essential contradiction of the moral world continues to play out in the final section of Morality, which is thus the last word of (human) spirit in its historical narrative, that is, the end of this chapter. How are we to take this puzzling text, with its references to “conscience” (*Gewissen*), the beautiful soul and the dialectic of judgment and confession? First, we have to remember where we are going, where we end up. I have mentioned this several times, in anticipation: we end with one short word, “Ja (Yea, Yes)!” an expression of raw affirmation, and which I have repeatedly qualified as an expression of pure identity and indeed of in-difference. As a “form of pure knowledge” (M671/W3, 493), the “Yes!” is an affirmation of immediate knowing and, thus, an expression of feeling, of certainty. The certainty of the “Yes!” is performative in the human form of community, one of shared belief, where “God is manifest” in that actual form of human self-knowledge. In

other words, the communal figure of immediate knowing is one that experiences the Beyond as an immediate feeling. As we saw earlier, in our discussion of “insight,” such immediate knowing, as the truth of both dogmatic, metaphysical reasoning and religious intuition, already points to their coming mediation (in Chapter 7, on Religion). However, here, at the end of Spirit, I maintain that Hegel’s communal “Ja!” is a figure where the copula, the very ground for real political/societal differentiation, has entirely evaporated. Indeed, in the “reconciling Yes!... the two I’s let go their antithetical existence” (M671) and instantiate a community of self-identity. In the ambiguous self-reflection of the $I = I$ relation that Hegel describes there, all that can be said is, “Yes!”

Of course, in “Yes!” there is no copula, and that’s the point. At the end of Spirit, the copula seems to have entirely disappeared. The judgment expressed in the $I = I$ turns out to be no judgment at all but simply an affirmation of immediate self-reflection, something akin to vanity. And yet this is not entirely the case. Hölderlin has shown us in his short text “*Urteil und Sein*,” and Hegel has understood, that the truth of the Fichtean first principle, as a judgment (*Ur-teil*), is that it is *not* only a statement of identity but *also* an affirmation of difference. However, this is clear only if we accept the copula as expressing *both* identity and difference, that is, only if we accept its speculative nature. In this sense, the $I = I$ expresses “the actual (*wirklich*) I [as] the universal knowledge of itself in its absolute opposite” (M671), which is, of course, the “I”! If the here-described relation between the I and the I, which is expressed in the copula between the two, is not ambiguous, then truly, nothing is. So, we can say that, in the “Yes!” the copula “disappears” but it is, at the same time, reincarnated in that one word, which is the expression of pure speculative ambiguity. Briefly, “Yes!” is the copula itself as a vanishing word, one that expresses the self-certainty of its meaning in a form of existing, communal actuality.

As such, as an expression of actuality, the community that we are left with at the end of Spirit is one of certainty, one of feeling, and one that is, we might say, purely temporal, tied into time without being “historical.” History requires a systematic, holistic narrative that is not yet available. The actuality of such communal words as “Yes!” (or “Here” and “Now”) is therefore, as such, ever-vanishing, caught up in a bad infinity of infinite progress toward a Beyond that is, at the same time, immediately present as an intuition or feeling, as a constantly reenacted certainty. The ever-renewed and always ambiguous “vanishing” that is a feature of Hegel’s “actuality,” temporally embodied in the punctuality of the word “Yes!” calls out for larger, meaningful narratives. These greater narrative contexts take the forms of absolute spirit that are presented in Chapters 7 (art and religion) and 8 (philosophy/science). Only within these greater structures of meaning does the endless progress of actuality make sense, but again, only to the extent that the forms of such actuality *have been*.

The absolute ambiguity of the communal “Yes!” means that it is inherently dangerous or at least unstable. It may indeed denote a benign community of shared purpose or belief, perhaps the communal struggle of a dominated and exploited people for justice and recognition; perhaps, a quiet, contemplative group

exercise in well-being; perhaps a Pietist congregation celebrating their shared faith in God or another denominational celebration of belief through music and song. However, the essential ambiguity of the communal "Yes!" may also mean much darker things, like the fascistic, exclusive, bigoted manifestations that I alluded to earlier. Once again, it is only within a broader narrative that the inescapable ambiguity of (modern) actuality may be instantiated in societal configurations of hermeneutical openness, configurations where difference is not merely tolerated in order to underscore some overbearing identity but where difference is itself a constitutive element without which true (speculative) identity is meaningless.

Having presented the end of Morality as the collapse of the contentless copula, in the I = I judgment, into the pure ambiguity of the "Yes!" we can look back at the oppositions within the final section in that light. These are presented as deriving from an initial moment of self-identical certainty that Hegel calls *Gewissen* (conscience). As I mentioned above, all the elaborate and, at times, opaque arguments of the "Conscience" section (M632) have to do with the fundamental modern dilemma that we first discovered in Unhappy (modern) Consciousness, and which Hegel refers to here (M658/W3, 483), in "the extreme abstractions" and "fluctuating attitude" between two poles: on one hand the inner certainty, the feeling of inner sanctity, the "purity of heart" that the Unhappy Consciousness derived from the pit of Skepticism, and, on the other, the dogmatic requirement that we first discovered in Stoicism, the necessity to make this purity real and to have it acknowledged by speaking it out. The problem, as we have seen, is that in speaking out, in uttering this inner moral certainty, it loses itself, sullies "the splendor of its inner being" (M658) in its existence "for others" (M651/W3, 478). For "language is self-consciousness existing for others" (M652).

Here, Hegel re-introduces the concept of "hypocrisy" (M660/W3, 485) as the means of holding apart the two determinant features of unhappy consciousness, in a way that allows the pure heart to utter itself and yet maintain its purity without recognizing itself in its traduced objectification, in the predication of its own discourse. So, while the pure heart who utters its moral conviction should see that the perversion of its own discourse, the misrepresentation or traducing of its purity when it is uttered forth *is* the very evil that it perceives in the world, hypocrisy allows the pure heart to act as if this were not the case. Evil appears as the Other. Individual moral purity is preserved. This separating and maintaining feature of hypocrisy allows moral consciousness (conscience) to espouse the "majesty of its elevation above specific law and [above] every content of duty [and to put] whatever content it pleases into its knowing and willing" (M655/W3, 481). I can judge the world without seeing myself in the predicates of my judgments.

In my book *The Anti-romantic*, I discuss the possibility that much of the present text, in Morality, can be understood in reference to Hegel's critique of ironic Romanticism. Certainly, I am not the first to make this link, although I think the links that I make to other critical Hegel texts are more complete. For example, the figure of "moral genius" (M655) is best understood in reference to Schleiermacher and his idea of moral virtuosity, which Hegel takes to task elsewhere, particularly in his Preface to Hinrichs's *Religion*. Similarly, the reference to the "elevation" and

“majesty” of the moral genius’s point of view is echoed in later Berlin-period texts where Hegel presents irony (particularly Fr. Schlegel’s) as representing a *Herrschaft* that looks down from its judgmental peaks. The expression “lord and master over every deed and actuality” (M667/W3, 490) is echoed in the “*Herr und Meister*” that is virtually a Hegelian mantra in his discussions of Schlegel and his brand of irony, for example, in s. 140 of the *Philosophy of Right*.

Of course, hypocrisy is specifically associated with Schleiermacher, in the *Philosophy of Right* (s. 164), and his theology of feeling, as expressed in his *Discourses on Religion*. As well, Hegel associates Schleiermacher with the creation of (Pietist) communities of shared feeling, which tend to develop around a virtuosic “mediator.” Here, in M655, the idea of a self-identical moral community (with which Morality ends) is first broached linguistically, where the “moral genius” utters forth his inner “divine” voice so as to actually constitute “the divine worship of a community,” engendered in the image of his own verb.

In the same vein, I have shown, again in my book on Hegel’s critique of Romantic irony, how the figure of the beautiful soul (M688/W3, 491) undoubtedly refers to Novalis, whom Hegel diagnoses as “wasting away in self-consumptive yearning [*sehnsüchtiger Sehnsucht*]” (ibid.), a psychically and physically pathological condition that results from being “entangled in the contradiction between the pure self and the necessity of that self to express itself” [*sich zu enttäusern* (ibid.)], the very contradiction that characterizes unhappy consciousness essentially. Indeed, I argue, in my chapter on Novalis, that Hegel sees the beautiful soul as the truth of romantic irony, that is, its outcome when hypocrisy is removed from the equation and the two opposing poles of inner purity and outer perversion are no longer held apart, when “this contradiction in its unreconciled immediacy is disordered” (M668) to the point of self-consumption.

As I discussed above, the whole “Conscience” section is concerned with moral judgment but, I believe, in a way that gets at the underlying, essential question of judgment itself, and with it, the issue of predication, and the inability of that onto-grammatical form of proposition to bear real content. This is the point made in the confusing dialectic between the consciousness that judges and the one that confesses. Without trying to untangle Hegel’s argument, the key to understanding the meaning of the exchange between the judge and the confessor can be found with reference to where things end: with the copulative-less pronouncement of “Yes!” that I discussed above.

The point in the dialectic between the judging consciousness and the one who confesses is that they are both saying the same thing: “I am so” or “Here I am” or again, “It’s me” (M667/W3, 490: *Ich bin’s* is an expression that Hegel uses elsewhere in reference to Schlegel’s ironic pronouncements). The point is that, in judgment, the subject is simply declaring himself; his act of judgment *is*, in fact, an act of *self*-confession. Similarly, the act of confession is actually a *self*-judgment, that is, a declaring or a self-positing. Both are saying the same thing, and their affair is indeed one of “utterance” (ibid.) and “words” (ibid.) and “speech” (ibid.). The “forgiveness” that cements the underlying identity between judgment and confession is thus “the indiscrete continuity and identity of I = I,” the communal

"Yes!" that ends the presentation of Spirit. While Hegel has shown how such moral certainty has pronounced or judged itself into a community of shared feeling for the Beyond (qua "the divine"), it remains to be seen how speculative content may arise within such an ambiguous community of "absolutely self-contained and exclusive individuality" (M670/W3, 492).

A last word on Spirit. While it may be satisfying, and flattering to one's scholarly vanity, to link up the different aspects in the Conscience section to the figures of Early German Romanticism, the question remains: why should Hegel employ the last pages of Chapter 6, bringing to a close his world-historical narrative of humanity, with clear reference to a contemporary intellectual movement that he is vehemently opposed to? While the substance of this critique is more coherently articulated fifteen or so years later, in Berlin, all the polemical elements are already in place, here, in the Conscience section of the *Phenomenology*. Specifically, here we find the "three universal presuppositions of the current epoch" that I have mentioned several times above, and which are announced in Hegel's Preface in Hinrichs's work on religion, in the arch-polemical context of a critique of romantic irony: (1) We can know nothing of the Truth (i.e., skepticism); (2) all we *can* know is finite material through the senses (dogmatic empiricism); (3) feeling alone provides access to the Truth, which lies beyond. These three "universal" presuppositions are articulated, in the *Phenomenology*, through the allusions to Novalis (skepticism), Schlegel (dogmatism), and Schleiermacher (feeling), who adds the extra elements of hypocrisy and community.

In the *Anti-romantic*, particularly in the chapter on Schleiermacher, I show how Hegel conceives romantic irony as a dominant feature of his own actuality. In other work, I show how Hegel's critique of actuality's three presuppositions also constitutes not only a critique of his present time but also what we might call the post-modern world, that is, the world that we are living in.

An aspect of Hegel's critical stance against (his) contemporary actuality which I have never before noticed but which occurs to me now, revisiting the section on Conscience, is the onto-grammatical connivance between judging and confessing, as societal speech acts that perform the ambiguous, modern opposition between feeling and dogmatic reasoning. For is it not indeed the case that our present linguistic actuality takes place in these two forms of expression? As speaking, writing (blogging, etc.) *makers* of reality, are we not constantly engaged in either "confessing" our feelings or in "judging" the feelings of others? And are not our "confessions" themselves acts of self-judgment? Hegel's cautionary critique demonstrates that the linguistic (communal, societal) actuality of such discourse says nothing more than: *Ich bin's* ("Here I am!" or "It's me!"). This critical realization is a dialectical step to overcoming the polarized opposition of the modern condition, and the limits of actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) per se. The dialectal step is provided by Hegel's introduction of "forgiveness" (M670) into the opposition, bringing about a "reconciliation" (ibid.) where judging and confessing are identified with the predicative form of $I = I$, a foundational grammatical form that actually articulates this ambiguous fact: judging is ultimately an act of self-confession and confession is an act of self-predication.

Forgiveness thereby represents the dialectical overcoming of the recalcitrant hypocrisy that keeps the opposing elements (feeling and judging) separate, fixing them in the form of Kantian *Verstand*. I have repeatedly insisted upon the modern actuality that Hegel attributes to the Kantian intellectual configuration, that is, how the essential opposition of the unhappy consciousness is conceived by Hegel as a fundamental feature of modernity, one which is brought to a crisis in the Enlightenment and Romantic personifications that we have visited in Reason and in Culture. At the end of Spirit, therefore, it should be of no surprise to find the critical nature of the unhappy condition presented as actuality itself.

What is surprising is the argument that Hegel uses in order to show that the crisis of modernity carries within itself the seeds of its own speculative overcoming or “forgiveness.” I introduced this idea above, in reference to the communal “Yes!” as a vanishing word, an expression of purely actual ambiguity that cries out for speculative articulation. However, if we look more closely, we see how Hegel’s argument is structured. First, we are shown that the oppositions of modernity can be understood as opposed expressions of confession (feeling) and judging. Then, we see how this apparent opposition is not really one, since both forms can be conceived in terms of the $I = I$. The next step consists in showing how this apparently solipsistic form of pure identity is, in fact, speculative. This can be done (thanks again to Hölderlin) only by demonstrating the speculative nature of the ambiguously mediating copula, that is, how it is not simply an expression of identity (requiring the spurious addition of a not-I that lies beyond) but carries difference within itself. The speculative interplay between identity and difference, in the copula of the $I = I$ proposition, is (ambiguously) announced in the last lines of the chapter, which I referred to briefly, above:

The reconciling “Yes!”, in which the two I’s let go their antithetical existence, is the existence of the I which has expanded into a duality and therein remains identical with itself and, in its complete externalization and opposite, possesses the certainty of itself.

In the dizzying fluctuations between the existence of “the two I’s” (as antithetical but also an antithesis that is “let go” in their reconciliation, while being, at the same time, “expanded into a duality,” one which nonetheless “remains identical with itself,” even through its “complete externalization” and opposition to itself!) we feel the speculative heartbeat of identity and difference, whose communal and actual embodiment is expressed in the “Yes!” where the copula has vanished in a word of pure ambiguity.

Finally, that the “Yes!” as expressed in terms of “certainty of itself” leads us back to the figure of certainty that introduced the Morality chapter, in the form of Conscience (*Gewissen*). Through the development of the chapter into forgiveness, we have come to grasp the inherently speculative nature of this certainty, how it truly involves oppositional otherness within itself, but only if we take that affirmation as a vanishing word, open to hermeneutical ambiguity. Such discovered ambiguity means that we can no longer view conscience simply in terms of the modern,

moral *individual's* sense of duty. Rather conscience now appears as a feature of modern actuality itself. As such, the certainty of conscience now has a world-historical character, where it is ascribed to all of "humanity" as the protagonist in spirit's narrative. We can now say, following Hegel's argument to its term, that the *duty* to overcome modernity's fundamental bipolar opposition, as anchored in the dominant culture of *Verstand*, is now imbedded in the conscience of humanity. Briefly put, the modern world is more than ready for speculative Science. It is its duty. And we are, at last, ready for Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

RELIGION AND THE ABSOLUTE OTHER

The transition from Chapter 6, from Spirit, to Religion is something that I have thought a lot about and recently have had the opportunity to publish a scholarly article on the subject (“Reason and Revelation: Absolute Agency and the Limits of Actuality in Hegel,” *Symposium*, 2017), from which I will draw material here. Essentially, in order to “cut to the chase,” let me say that the transition from Spirit to Religion involves the move from the narrative of human reason to that of absolute revelation. Of course, this move takes place within the greater narrative structure that is the *Phenomenology* itself, and so, we are not talking about a new story, in Religion, one that suddenly appears out of nowhere and follows its own, unrelated path. Rather, we have a shift in point of view, or, better still, we have the same story that we read in the earlier chapters but now told through the experiences of a different protagonist. Without this second point of view, the story would not be complete.

Generally, as we saw in our discussion of the Enlightenment, divine Revelation stands in distinction to human reason. The narrative of reason does suppose “humanity” as the protagonist, in its endless striving for the absolutely True and Good. However, as we have seen in Chapter 5, “reason” has a specific sense in the *Phenomenology*, one that is tied to the worldly strivings of the individual. Chapter 6 has shown how the *human*, historical aspects of those strivings determine them to be no longer simply those of individuals but of spirit itself. Consequently, it is in counter-distinction to the human story of spirit that the *absolute* agency of revelation has its story to tell.

Only by grasping the complicity of the two points of view, the narrative of reason (qua spirit) and that of revelation, that is, by reading the story as recounted by each agent, do we comprehend the whole picture, a comprehension that is presented, in the *Phenomenology*, at the end, in Absolute Knowing, which presents us with the holistic preview of the system that Hegel calls Science. In the above-mentioned article, I show how this same narrative logic, distinguishing and then reconciling human and absolute points of view, can be found throughout Hegel’s major works, in his *Science of Logic*, in the *Encyclopedia* itself and even within its main constituent parts (the *Encyclopedia Logic*, the *Philosophy of Nature*, and the *Philosophy of Spirit*). Readers interested in a more developed account of how the two points of view play out across the Hegelian system are invited to consult the above-mention paper.

I believe the problem that the Religion chapter poses for many commentators of the *Phenomenology* is indicative of a misunderstanding that goes to the very core of how we have tended to comprehend Hegel's systematic philosophy, namely, our reluctance to consider the role of revelation in Hegel's idea of absolute knowing and, therefore, in his notion of Science. Consequently, the misunderstanding also involves how other fundamental terms of systematicity in Hegel may be misapprehended: "Concept," "Spirit," and "Idea." In all these Hegelian notions, absolute knowing is present, not only as the human striving to know absolute substance through the activity of reason (qua spirit) but also as the subjective, knowing agency of absolute substance.

Through its revelatory agency, the Absolute not only gives itself to be known but must come to know itself, just as the goal of human reason is likewise self-knowledge. Since, in Hegel, self-knowledge means self-knowledge through otherness, each form of knowing agency must take place through knowledge of its Other. Briefly put, reason is human self-knowledge through knowledge of the absolute; revelation is the self-knowledge of the Absolute through human self-knowledge.

In the later *Encyclopedic* articulations of the system called Science (*Wissenschaft*), religion appears as one facet of what Hegel calls absolute spirit, and which includes, besides religion, presentations of art and philosophy. In the *Phenomenology*, the three facets are compressed into the Religion chapter, spilling over, as philosophy, into the final chapter on Absolute Knowing, which provides the bridge between philosophy and Science, where the love of wisdom becomes wisdom itself. In the Religion chapter, therefore, Hegel presents art, religion, and aspects of philosophy as the elements of (human) spirit wherein the Absolute's revelatory agency is seen to be at play. Since Religion involves the complicity between the Absolute and the human, between reason and revelation, it is the space where the Absolute actually knows itself through the otherness of human spirit, and where this latter knows itself through the revelatory self-knowledge of the Absolute. In other words still, art, religion, and philosophy form the meaningful content of the absolute copula between subject and predicate, where human and divine agencies reciprocally play out in each grammatical term. As Hegel clearly expresses this speculative truth in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*:

[God] has revealed Himself and continues to reveal Himself, and clearly, in this revelation, it is not human reason with all its limits that knows God but, on the contrary, it is the spirit of God in man [that knows God]; in speculative terms, it is the self-consciousness of God that knows itself in human knowledge. (W17, 385)

The above quote, if we substitute the references to God with more scientific references to "the Absolute," shows the reciprocal complicity at work between reason and revelation, where each, as the substantial predicate for the other, is *speculatively* accorded its own subjective agency.

Without revelation, reason qua spirit remains “human, all too human,” essentially limited in its reach for the unattainable Beyond, an endless striving of the reasonably legislated free will, as we find in the moral visions of Kant and Fichte, that constantly repositions itself against nature. Conversely, however, without the activity of reason from the perspective of human free self-realization, revelation remains the expression of authoritarian dogmatism. On its own, reason can do no better than Kantian moral freedom and the endless endings that characterize actuality, culminating in the modern world of universalized individualism; and revelation alone takes the form of heteronomous necessity, of dogmatic “positivity,” to use the word of the time.

The complicit interplay between reason and revelation, and their organic comprehension in systematic Science, is exactly the promise of reconciliation that appeared at the end of Morality, presented as the *conscience* of human philosophical actuality: the duty to reconcile the fundamental modern opposition between reasoning (dogmatism, materialism, empiricism, Stoicism) and feeling (faith, intuition, Skepticism). As we have seen, in Hegel’s view, this unhappy condition has come to a crisis in the post-Enlightenment world of Kantian *Verstand*. In other words, it is no accident that the overcoming of the modern dilemma is carried out in a system that comprehends (human) reason and (absolute) revelation as working speculatively together. In order to bring about such a reconciliation, as we saw above in the Spirit sections on “Insight,” each apparently opposed position must be taken, on its own, as a form of immediate knowing, whose mediation is to be carried *through the other*, to which it was initially opposed. We also saw how, for Hegel, the mediation is not simply a matter of theoretical interest; it is fully ethical, societal, and political.

Before entering into the substance of the Religion chapter, it is necessary to look more closely at how otherness enters the copula through the absolute agency that I am defining in terms of revelation. In other terms, the substantial predicate, which human spirit has been determining through the first six chapters of Hegel’s *Phenomenological* account, must now be taken as a (substantial) subject. Only in recognizing the subjective agency of the absolute predicate may the copula embody the dialogical interplay that is meant to fulfill the judgment form, a fulfillment that Hegel presents, in the Preface, in terms of the speculative proposition. The example Hegel uses there, “God is Being,” should already alert us to the absolute dimension that is the vocation of the speculative outcome he has in mind. Only by completing the narrative in this way are we able to overcome the impasse that we encountered in the Morality chapter and get beyond the endless dead ends that limit actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) as the work of human reason alone.

As we now know, the speculative sentence involves the essential difference of otherness that occurs when the predicate is allowed to “speak up,” to posit itself as subject and not only as determinable substance. The fully systematic articulation of the speculative proposition means acknowledging the absolute’s revelatory agency as the essential, onto-grammatical condition whereby the agency of otherness becomes possible. Furthermore, since we have seen how the speculative nature of

the copula (the speculative interplay between subject and predicate) involves the constitution of vanishing words, as signs that *have been* invested with a meaning that escapes them, the recognition of absolute agency completes the narrative framework in which meaning arises, the horizon upon which hermeneutical activity makes sense. The communal and dialogical quest for meaning is possible only to the extent that there is such a thing as meaning at all. The narrative closure ensured by the absolute point of view ensures that things may be interpreted.

Generally, for us, readers of Hegel in the twenty-first century, the question addressed might be simply formulated thus: How does meaning enter the world? While answers to this question are too numerous to mention (involving art, religion, scientific reflection, etc.), on the most fundamental or universal level, we can give this answer: through the introduction of otherness (difference) but within a unified field or upon a holistic horizon (identity). If we take the universe itself as a field or horizon, then it seems clear that if it were absolutely uniform and self-identical, meaning or significance would be impossible. In terms of contemporary big bang theory, we can say that without inflation (the postulated short, post-singularity period of rapid, disorderly expansion), the "universe" would have remained uniformly smooth and meaningless. Not only would the conditions for consciousness (otherness, difference) be absent but there would be nothing to be conscious about, and no words to express it.

In terms of present-day phenomenology, we can perhaps understand Hegelian "revelation" as "givenness," somewhat akin to how it is conceived by Jean-Luc Marion, as the vaguely miraculous stuff that appears before us, ripe for interpretation. However, today's phenomenological research is generally uncomfortable with assigning that which is *given* to any sort of "giver," especially if it is called "the Absolute"! The linguistic study that we have been carrying out has taught us that without the subjective aspect of a "giver," in the form of absolute agency, such stuff never reaches beyond the status of arbitrarily determinable, empty signs as predicates. We must recognize the subjectivity of the absolute predicate/substance in order to conceive meaningful, vanishing words that are hermeneutically open.

I return to a reference that might again prove helpful in my presentation of the idea of revelation as the ur-condition for otherness, difference and meaning: Hölderlin's short text "Judgment and Being" (*Urteil und Sein*), a text that is pivotal to our enterprise here, which turns on the speculative nature of the copula. As Hölderlin's text affirms, in its puzzling, concluding reference to the Leibnizian principles of identity and sufficient reason, Being cannot be arrived at from identity alone; difference is a necessary condition for *existing* Being, and thus, so is otherness, which Hölderlin sees as arising within the copula of the absolute $I = I$ judgment. The Hegelian implication is that determinate Being itself must carry differentiating otherness in order to really exist. Of course, the fact that existence involves the essential interplay of identity and difference also means that it is necessarily conditioned, temporal, and *finite*; existing beings must "go to ground" (*zu Grund gehen*) as Hegel puts it in his *Logics's* chapters on "Essence," in order for beings to have any meaning (essence) at all.

In the linguistic terms inherent in the form of judgment, we can understand the finite, temporal nature of existence in terms of vanishing words. Vanishing is the *essential* condition for their meaningfulness, without which we would have only the unmediated presence of empty signs, signifying both nothing and anything at all. Briefly, meaningful words would be impossible without the introduction of otherness, and the introduction of absolute otherness is afforded by Hegelian revelation. Consequently, it is the absolute dimension of revelatory otherness that ensures the narrative structure needed to complete the *Phenomenological* account, which otherwise would have to “end” in endless, formless, always actual *Bildung*, a ceaseless striving for an unattainable but intuited Beyond. Without such narrative closure, the endless iterations of actuality would be meaningless.

Actuality, in Hegel, has its limitations. In fact, it is endlessly limited, a feature that I address in detail in the *Symposium* article that I referred to above. The category of “Actuality,” which closes the Objective side of Hegel’s *Encyclopedia Logic*, is the highest determination of objectivity that human reason qua spirit, left on its own, is capable of attaining. As such, *Wirklichkeit* is certainly more meaningful than the emptiness of indeterminate Being with which the *Logic*’s narrative begins, fittingly, in a “sentence” without a copula (“Being, pure being”). However, actuality is shot through with bad infinity. As such, it is the ontological locus of human political history, human morality, and even the human, all too human re-iterations of modern art.

As we have seen, actuality characterizes the endlessly modern expressions of judgment and confession in the Morality chapter. Indeed, if the worldly pursuits of politics, history, art, morality, and so on that Hegel evokes strike us, *still today*, as recognizable, it is because they are ontologically never-ending and terminally flawed. Consequently, it is simply wrong to unduly promote the category of actuality, as if it were Hegel’s last word in ontological meaningfulness, and then to judge his philosophy with respect to how that category compares to the failures of the “real world” (cf. E. Fackenheim). For Hegel, actuality itself and the strivings of the human world must always disappoint and indeed scandalize us; the actual world can never live up to the expectations of human striving, to the beautiful reconciliations that are already incarnate in the forms of art and religion as expressions of absolute spirit, and realized in philosophical Science. Actuality alone must always fail, and yet “always failing” already implies a constantly renewed effort, one that I associated above with the conscience of humanity and its speculative duty, without which *Bildung* would make no sense.

The reluctance to consider the Religion chapter as presenting the revelatory expression of absolute agency, and the failure to see revelation as the introduction of absolute otherness, upon which all particular, discreet and dialogical otherness depends, consigns readers to an exclusively humanistic, proto-Feuerbachian, unilateral, and therefore erroneous view of Hegel and his ideas of human, societal community.

It may be objected that in the introductory paragraphs to Religion (M672-83/W3, 495–502), Hegel does not use the substantive “das Absolute” but concentrates rather on *Geist* (Spirit). Therefore, my reading of Religion as the self-revelation

of the Absolute through its agency might seem far-fetched. In response, I would first point out that we are reading the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and so *Geist* and its significant phenomena are what Hegel is presenting. Humanity is always and essentially involved in spirit, although humanity is not the sole agent of its constitution. While actuality reflects the human and historical side of spirit, that is, the anthropological side of the story, this is not the *whole* story. In order to constitute spirit, the human endeavor must be informed by absolute agency, in a way where each dimension knows itself through the other, as I wrote above. The question addressed in this chapter is consequently: what are the *geistliche* phenomena of Religion? In other words, what human spiritual forms are involved in the Absolute's self-knowledge through revelation? Consequently, the introductory paragraphs to Religion are concerned with distinguishing between spirit "in time" as "actuality" (M679/W3, 498) or "actual spirit" (M681) and "spirit that knows itself as spirit" (M682/W3, 501). The latter is presented as "*true* actuality" or "spirit [that] is actual as absolute spirit" (ibid.).

Absolute spirit, as I mentioned above, takes place in the forms of art, religion, and philosophy. These spiritual (human) manifestations are "*true* actuality" because they are informed by absolute agency. They are "fulfilled [*erfüllt*] with spirit" (ibid.). In other words, art, religion, and philosophy *do* take place in actuality. They are both human and divine; they constantly strive for a Beyond and yet, since they are always already "free" (M678/W3, 497), these forms already express the Beyond. Thus, in the worldly, human forms of art, religion, and philosophy, "absolute spirit... remains conscious of itself" (ibid.).

The forms of absolute spirit that we find in Religion are consequently "middle terms" (M679) between the agencies of human reason and absolute revelation. As such, they are related to discursive elements that we have visited through our investigation of the first six chapters, where the speculative nature of the copula was problematic. Observing them now as expressions of absolute spirit will allow us to appreciate these discursive elements as instantiations of speculative language, presented phenomenologically as "free actuality" (art, religion, and philosophy), where the copula can be grasped as a fulfilled "middle term" that involves otherness at its most fundamental, absolute level.

The speculative "filling" [*Erfüllung* (M682)] of the copula is witnessed in the sentence where Hegel refers to the determinations of "actual [i.e. strictly human] spirit" as the "attributes of *its* substance," as opposed to what occurs "in religion," where the same substantial determinations now appear as "predicates of the [absolute] subject" (M681). As we have seen, the move from the anthropological point of view to that of absolute agency allows us to conceive the passively predicated substance (qua attribute) as now taking on its own subjectivity and predicative agency. In the context of absolute spirit, we comprehend how meaning involves the differentiating otherness, which, at the most fundamental level, comes about through the complicitous interplay between the human and absolute otherness. As we will see, the language of absolute spirit, spoken in the linguistic forms of art, religion, and philosophy, takes place in vanishing words, conferring on these forms of "free actuality" a hermeneutical openness that is inherently dialogical

and societal. Briefly, the discourses of art, religion, and philosophy perform their own societal realities, ones which go beyond the strictly unilateral, homogeneous aspects of the human moral community of shared belief that we were left with at the end of Chapter 6.

Nature Religion: Light as Essence (das Lichtwesen, M685/W3, 505)

Through the first six chapters of the *Phenomenology*, we have witnessed the subjective agency of human spirit as it predicated itself into the substantial Other: nature, objectivity, other people, the world, the body, and so on. We have seen how each form of consciousness that we dealt with involved a linguistic relation where the predicate appeared, at some point in the dialectic, as an immediate, empty linguistic sign ripe for the subjective determination whereby it could be invested with meaning. The informed, predicated sign, as we saw, becomes the meaningful word. We also saw how meaning always outstrips the word that it inhabits, precisely because the word can never entirely do without its embodiment in a terminally inadequate linguistic sign. In this sense, words are necessarily vanishing, a condition necessary for their meaningfulness.

We have seen how such subjective predication of the substantial Other takes place within a holistic narrative, thus providing a movement or progression where later forms or episodes are both informed by what happened earlier, and make sense of the earlier episodes, a logic that implies the ultimate narrative closure that we are moving toward in the last two chapters. The progression that we have witnessed has not been fruitless. The substance that has been progressively predicated by the onto-grammatical subject has become progressively informed with meaning, to a point where, at the end of Chapter 6 (Spirit), the predicated substance is now absolutely meaningful and as such should be itself taken as a subject. This “new” subject, as absolute Other, is what I have been describing as absolute, revelatory agency, the subject of this chapter. The problem now becomes: how can the Absolute be conceived as a vanishing word? As such, it must be meaningful. It must be embodied, not as a dead sign but as a living being, one that is necessarily finite and temporal, and indeed, historical, in the sense of having a meaningful, real temporality that can be recounted. Consequently, in Religion, we will look at how predication runs in a new direction, where the absolutely substantial Other now acts as absolute subject. It is the confluence of this “new” substantial predicative agency, acting together with the subjective work of human spirit that we have witnessed in the earlier chapters, which brings about the realization of the speculative sentence and the fulfilled copula of Absolute Knowing (Chapter 8).

As a vanishing word, the absolute substance as predicative subject must (now) predicate itself into bodily forms. It must invest itself in signs that allow it to *be* meaningful. Put differently, the Absolute must take on finite forms, without which it would be meaningless. If the Absolute is to come alive, take on forms, and vanish, it must do so through the body/signs that it invests and leaves behind.

Consequently, this chapter, on Religion, might be read as presenting “the body/sign of the Absolute” or rather “bodies/signs,” since there are more than one.

The issue at stake turns on perhaps the most fundamental metaphysical challenge in German Idealism (and beyond?): given the Absolute (aka God), what relation does it have with the world of finite reality? Hegel's onto-grammatical answer: without finitude, the Absolute would be meaningless. “But meaning *for whom?*” we might ask. The revelatory agency of the Absolute, variously embodied in the finite signs of vanishing words, must appear, must take place in phenomena that are *for us*, for the Hegelian “humanity” that has, up until the end of Chapter 6 (Spirit), acted as the subjective protagonist. The forms of absolute embodiment are the *phenomena* presented in the Religion chapter, where we apprehend the ways in which the Absolute appears or speaks out *for us*, first in the finite signs of nature, then in the figures of art and finally in the words of revealed religion.

In its revelatory agency, the Absolute takes on bodily forms that are less natural and increasingly human or spiritual. Reciprocally, we see that, in the process described in the Religion chapter, humanity itself takes on forms that are increasingly “divine” or absolute, that is, through the forms of absolute spirit: art, religion, and philosophy qua speculative Science. This reciprocity should not surprise us. If we now think of the absolute substance as acting with subjective agency, then its predication must have something substantial to work on, signs that can be invested with meaning, transforming them into vanishing words. Such reciprocity is the necessary condition for the mutual recognition, for the self-knowledge in otherness between human reason and absolute revelation that defines what Hegel means by absolute knowing: Science as logos that is the joint work of humanity and the Idea. Scientific logos, the actual language of speculative Science, is both the most human form of the Absolute and the most absolute form of the human.

The first forms of absolute revelatory agency are entirely natural, and, thus, for Hegel, neither human nor spiritual per se. These immediate forms of revelation are found in the natural signs that we first discovered in Sense-certainty, as simply that which presents itself before us in the nominative materiality of singular sense data. The coincidence between Sense-certainty and the first form of Religion is not arbitrary. In order to discover the most *human* forms of absolute bodiliness, that is, how the Absolute takes on bodily form, we must begin with the body itself as pure sign. The Absolute's revelatory narrative of self-knowledge through otherness will replay many of the same steps that we witnessed in the trajectory of spirit (reason) itself, through the first six chapters, a trajectory that began, in Sense-certainty, in a world of empty signs. We now witness those signs, invested with the absolute Other, come alive, interact with others, and form societal communities of real dialogical difference, where the other's body is “read” or “heard” as a vanishing word.

The forms of mediation that we will discover through the Religion chapter are therefore communal in the hermeneutical sense. They are constituted of vanishing words, open to interpretation, in a common pursuit of meaning. In terms of religion, we will discover how the communities of absolute spirit will leave behind the strictly individual or singular experience of natural revelation and come

to embrace shared experiences of what might best be described as “worship” (*Cultus*). Again, the progression in the Absolute’s side of the story mirrors the move to increasingly communal figures in (human) spirit itself. However, since the forms of communal “worship” that are discovered in Religion are presented as revelations of the absolute Other and no longer as the exclusive embodiments of human spirit qua feeling, these communities are no longer purely self-identical social configurations of shared belief but, rather, instantiations of speculative difference at the most fundamental level.

What I mean (and what I believe Hegel means) is this: the communities of shared “worship” that now arise are the actual embodiments of language whose content is more than that provided by the empty copula of the $I = I$. The language of art, religion, and philosophical Science, because it conjoins reason and revelation beyond their unilateral dogmatic iterations, brings about communities of “worship” that are de facto dialogical and hermeneutical, that is, instantiations of identity and difference. In other words still, in the languages of absolute spirit, the copula is full-filled, where the ambiguity that we discovered through Hegel’s various presentations of law is now anchored in discourses that are no longer constituted by arbitrary signs but taken and even celebrated as having meaningful content. In a way, we could say that such discourses are sacred, and yet because they are formed by vanishing words, they are finite and open to interpretation. Such are the texts of religion and philosophical Science. Each has its community of worship: the first, in the church, the second in the state university. While the “sacred” text of the former is easily recognized in doctrine (e.g., the Nicene Creed in the Lutheran tradition), the latter is perhaps less likely to be recognized in the *Encyclopedic* texts of (Hegelian) Science. I will revisit this idea in Chapter 8. For how could such communally read and celebrated discourses be other than hermeneutically open, when they are the actual embodiments of the human and the absolute Other, where meaning is recognized and yet always outstrips the words in which it is found?

The absolute narrative, in its increasingly human embodiment and in its final expression in the speculative language of Science, must be configured historically. The meaningfulness of revelatory language, which takes place in finitely temporal vanishing words, and the shared human dimension of this language ensure that it must be *historical* in the narrative form of its accounts. Within the economy of Hegel’s *Encyclopedia*, this means that the discourses of absolute spirit, of art, religion, and philosophy are presented as histories. Here, in the *Phenomenology*, the historical configuration of absolute spirit’s discourses determines that the religion chapter moves from the punctual, instantaneous, non-historical temporality of the “here” and the “now,” of Sense-certainty but now grasped as immediate, absolute revelation, through the increasingly historical forms that we witnessed earlier in Self-consciousness.

In order to make clearer the shared trajectories between the earlier chapters of the *Phenomenology* and those of Religion, I have presented the outline below, showing how human spirit and absolute agency (in Religion) can be seen to match up. Significantly, the Reason chapter itself is left out as is Spirit per se. The reason for this omission, as Hegel suggests in M673 (W3, 495), is that the Religion chapter

deals with the shared content of spirit, as both human and absolute. The Reason chapter, as an investigation into the Enlightenment and its fundamental division between reason and revelation, has no place in the story of this sharing, nor does Chapter 6 on Spirit, which presents the historical figures of the Enlightenment's dilemma as figures of modernity. Since modernity, for Hegel, is characterized by the actuality of the unhappy opposition between reason and revelation, the shared story of their conciliation "ends" in the early modern figure of unhappy consciousness. The communal figure of shared belief that we find at the conclusion of Unhappy Consciousness, and which is reiterated at the end of Morality, in the "yes!" of reconciliation, is now mediated, in Religion, through the content-ful texts of identity and difference. The services of the arbitrary, individual, and often dangerous mediator are no longer required.

Sections from the Religion Chapter, in Relation to Figures of Consciousness

- A) Natural Religion = Consciousness of absolute spirit
 - a) God as Light M685 (*Lichtwesen*) = Sense-certainty
 - b) Plant and Animal M689 = Perception
 - c) The Artificer M691 = Understanding
- B) Religion in the form of Art = Self-consciousness of absolute spirit (dialectic master/slave as Creon/Antigone, their relation to nature)
 - a) The Abstract work of art M705 (Creon = Master/Understanding)
 - b) The living work of art M720 (Antigone = nature/Bacchae/*Volk*/female, M723)
 - c) Spiritual work of art = Self-consciousness of Spirit
 - Zeus = Stoicism – dogmatism
 - Comedy = Skepticism (indifference)
- C) Revealed Religion = The Unhappy Consciousness of absolute spirit—community of believers—similar to the end of "Morality"—the "yes" of reconciliation. Now, the word made flesh.

The revelatory agency of the Absolute, through which it comes to know itself or comes to be conscious of itself by revisiting the human forms of consciousness that we have discovered in the first four chapters of the *Phenomenology* (up to, but not including, Reason), is now further determined. This "revisiting" is not an extraneous, artificial methodological conceit. Rather, Hegel's point is to show how the forms of human consciousness and those of absolute consciousness are complicit, where the self-consciousness of one must pass through that of the other. We move from one form to the next, not because Hegel says so but because, from our point of view as readers, the holistic narrative logic has already determined the progression. From the point of view of the actual forms of consciousness, whether from the human or the absolute point of view, the experience of each moment as "having been" informs and enriches the protagonist for new adventures. Such "informing" and "enrichment" are expressed, in more technical language, as "determination" (*Bestimmung*).

In spite of the apparent coincidence between the movement of human spirit, through consciousness and self-consciousness, and that of absolute spirit, which appears to be revisiting the same forms that we discovered in Chapters 1 to 4, it is important to not miss a crucial distinction, which Hegel makes in M686 (W3, 505). In the first step of the process of its “self-knowing,” he writes, “absolute spirit” does not look for itself in the otherness of the immediate, natural being that arose before consciousness in Sense-certainty. Absolute spirit, in its “first diremption,” is not concerned with the “non-spiritual being that is filled with the contingent determinations of sensation.” Rather, absolute spirit is now confronted with “being that is filled with spirit.” In other words, as I have been explaining, the “new” predicative power of the absolute substance, in its revelatory agency, addresses that Being which presented itself to us through the agency of human spirit. Briefly, the object standing before the absolute substance/subject is one that is *itself* subjective. It is not pure sense material but rather an object that is “filled with spirit (mind).” Indeed, it could be no other way, for if its object were not spiritual, absolute spirit could not know or recognize itself in it.

Since we have recognized ourselves in the predicative strivings of human spirit, in its struggle to render its worlds (as substance) meaningful, we must accept that, conversely, absolute spirit, in its subjective agency, takes *us* as predicates. As such, we are not, however, taken as empty signs, as “non-spiritual being... filled with contingent determinations” (M686) but rather, in saying that the revelatory agency of the Absolute is “for us,” we acknowledge ourselves as beings “filled with spirit.” Such filling, as we have seen, does not take us as empty vessels. Rather, spiritual *Erfüllung* has been brought about through the historical formation that we have worked through, in the first six chapters. Once again, it is in the ambiguous, speculative complicity between the two actions, where (human) spirit and absolute spirit show themselves to be both subject and predicate to the other, that the copula is filled and systematic Science becomes possible. Such systematic fulfillment is impossible without the narrative closure of absolute spirit, of the revelatory agency instantiated in the human/divine words of art, religion, and philosophy.

In the introductory pages to the material on Religion, I have referred repeatedly to “meaning.” Meaning is the content that subjective thought invests into empty linguistic signs, raising them to the status of living and vanishing words. Meaning outstrips words themselves and arises over the finitude of the signs that they enliven. Words vanish. As such, meaning is hermeneutically open; it can never be definitively confined in and to the words that it inhabits. Meaning is inherently dialogical and communal/societal. When meaning is fixed and confined to one word, in a hypocritical attempt at unilateral predication, then that word is taken as a dead sign. I have likened the relation between meaning and word to the one that we commonly express in the soul-body relation. The lively body is ensouled. Radically distinguishing soul from body renders the latter a dead sign, open to alien predication.

Of course, “meaning” is not per se a Hegelian term of art. He prefers other terms, such as those that might be translated as “thought,” “determinant

negativity," "subjectivity," "selfhood," and, above all, "essence." I believe there is a virtual congruence between meaning and what Hegel generally refers to as essence (*Wesen*). Thus, as I have written earlier, when Hegel writes that "*Wesen ist gewesen*" (W6, 13), that "essence is what has been," he is putting in his technical terms what I have been expressing as "meaning," as it arises from vanishing words (*gewesen*). The onto-grammatical relevance of essence, as it applies to meaning, is necessary for our comprehension of the revelatory agency of the Absolute, as first presented in the "Natural Religion" section (M684). More generally, understanding the absolute's revelatory agency in terms of essence will help us see how our experience of revelation translates into the meaningful expressions that are *Phenomenologically* presented in the forms of art, religion, and philosophy.

In the religion of nature, we experience pure essence, which Hegel characterizes as light. In fact, the title of the section "*Lichtwesen*" plays on the ambiguity of "*Wesen*," which can be read as both a Being and essence. Put differently, in the religion of nature, we experience pure meaning, which, in onto-grammatical terms, signifies the pure vanishing of the finite things that I have been calling "signs," when they are taken as words. Thus, the phrase "light disperses its unitary nature in forms" (M688/W3, 506) signifies that essence (meaning) reveals itself through the overcoming of natural thing/signs. In Sense-certainty, this was indeed our experience of the multitudinous sense impressions. In grasping them in their singularity, through the indexical "this," we discovered that our experience was, in truth, reducible to the words "here" and "now," which, in turn, revealed nothing other than pure universality itself (M99/W3, 85). In Sense-certainty, however, universality appeared as an emptiness, and thus as the failure of our attempt to know objectivity through the immediate, natural singularity of its signs. Here, universality is experienced as absolute "revelation" (M685/W, 505), which inevitably presents itself as *absolutely* "here" and "now."

In onto-grammatical terms, we saw how the things of Sense-certainty appeared as linguistic signs, as *Namen*, in Hegel's vocabulary. When we determined these signs, ascribing to them the "this" necessary to capture their singular essence, they indeed became words but words of pure vanishing, of pure essence, of pure, and, thus, indeterminate meaning: "here" and "now." Consequently, the meaning at play was a simple *Meinen*, that is, an arbitrary predication of sense as "mine." In the religion of nature, pure meaning is no longer the experience of subjective emptiness. As pure essence, as pure vanishing, "here" and "now" iterate the revelatory agency of the Absolute in its raw immediacy. Put differently, in the religious context, "here" and "now" are the most fundamental expressions of the human experience of the divine, where the primitive agency of reason (in Sense-certainty) is always immediately at one with the fundamental agency of revelation.

Such an experience can be nothing other than religious and indeed represents an immediate form of worship. For forms of worship (*Cultus*) are the locus where human reason comingles with the divine. We might use the expression "religious consciousness" to describe Hegel's idea of worship but only if we take that consciousness as expressing the ambiguous complicity between the self-knowledge of the Absolute (revelation) and the human (reason), and recognize the

ambiguity as inherently communal. Indeed, worship always involves communal structures that are brought about by speculative difference within language. In “here” and “now” such speculative difference exists in a thoroughly immediate form, where the words express both sensuous human knowledge and the revealed existence of the absolute Other. It is a primitive language, devoid of copulative differentiation, where subject and predicate are indistinguishable. The *subsequent* forms of worship that we will encounter in Religion will reflect the elaboration and fulfillment of the speculative copula between the human and the divine, presented in more substantial forms of language.

The “primitive” character of the religion of nature, as a form of worship, means that the religious community that it instantiates is itself unmediated and undifferentiated. The experience of the divine is restricted to the singular, punctual apprehension of singular, natural things, where all singular *Namen*/signs (e.g., “tree,” “brook,” “mountain”) are simply “names [*Namen*] of the many-named One” (M687/W3, 506), writes Hegel. Worship, in this context, means taking any “shape” or “form of Nature” as “dissolved in its sublimity” (M686). The singularity of such a religious experience can produce nothing truly communal or societal and, indeed, worship, in this context, produces only a kind of religious “state of nature,” where each believer *is* their own religion, purely through their individual experience of the divine in the “here” and “now.” It is also this “primitive” or unmediated aspect that allows the religion of nature to be read anthropologically, as if referring to a Hegelian depiction of an undetermined animist culture.

Of course, in Sense-certainty, we saw how such a state of consciousness should not be assigned to anthropological forms completely divorced from ourselves, and the same is true with the immediate expression of the “Religion of nature.” Certainly, the religious state of nature described above could easily be assigned to Hegel’s contemporary: Schleiermacher, and his view of religion as a personal, singular feeling of the universal, a view which Hegel heavily criticizes. More generally, however, as nothing other than the immediate feeling of sublimity, through an apprehension of nature in its infinite splendor (M686), we can say that the religion of nature refers to an ever-present, ever-possible experience of revelation itself, or, if you prefer, of the sublime wonder of givenness.

Taken in this way, as an individual revelatory experience, the religion of nature is ahistorical, even atemporal, or, again on Hegel’s onto-grammatical account, it is always absolutely “here” and “now,” *for* the individual consciousness. Thus, it is just as much part of a specific religious experience today, in our individual, deeply personal celebrations of the sublimity of “nature” through its beauty, purity, and so on as it may have been in conjectured “primitive” animist “states of nature” or in Hegel’s own time. Indeed, on Hegel’s account, the individual, personal, ecstatic, and fundamentally non-doctrinal character of some contemporary Western forms of worship, as reliant on “religious experience,” is perfectly coherent with the individuality that is implicit in the consumerist approach to the world of singular things generally, as *Namen*/signs, that we witnessed in Sense-certainty.

The singular religious experience (worship) of revelation as absolute essence in its naked immediacy is, of course, unbearable over time. In fact, what is experienced

in the “here” and “now” of revelatory natural splendor is infinite essence (meaning) qua pure vanishing. And just as the disquieting, unsatisfactory possession of the singular, immediate things/signs in Sense-certainty led us to seek their more substantial anchoring as property in Perception, here, religious consciousness (aka worship) will seek “to endow its vanishing shapes with an enduring subsistence” (M688/W3, 506). Thus, we move from the indeterminate universality of “God as light,” to the more determinate forms of revelation in “Plant and animal.” In making this move, we are not simply transitioning from a worship of the inorganic to that of the organic. Rather, we are determining life itself, which in God as light appeared as “reeling and unconstrained” (ibid.), to more substantial embodiments of revelation, in definite forms of nature.

This is important since the move to “Plant and animal” worship allows us to comprehend that the religious forms that we are dealing with are those where the absolute substance predicates itself into forms of human consciousness (spirit), thereby enlivening them in the same way that “our” human conscious activity enlivened the natural otherness that we worked through in the first six chapters. In other words, the subjective agency of the Absolute now “ensouls” our forms of consciousness, making them meaningful in the same way that our predicative activity ensouled the bodies/signs that we addressed through our striving to make *them* meaningful, as vanishing words. Briefly, the revelatory agency of the Absolute renders meaningful the essentially transitory nature of (our) forms of consciousness.

This is what we experience in Hegel's narrative of religious consciousness (worship): an increasingly determinate, organic conception of “life,” one whose truth will only be definitively revealed in “Revealed Religion,” where *the* Death, that is, *vanishing* per se, brings about a form of life that exists in the communal celebration of the Word in its essential (human/absolute) ambiguity.

Nature Religion: Plant and Animal Worship

In Hegel, “nature” per se is objectivity in its thoroughly immediate and thus indeterminate form. Nature stands against thought as its absolute Other. In passing through this natural Other, thought informs it with ideal liveliness and ultimately with the life of the Idea (aka God, the Absolute, freedom). This process is violent. Thought is negativity. Nature, in its original, immediate state, is overcome; its bones are ground down in the crucible of thought, as Hegel expresses the action in a fragment from the *Phenomenology* period (W2, 552). However, more positively, the thoughtful determination of immediate, indeterminate nature produces the actual forms of life for which nature is celebrated and whose highest, most spiritual form is the human, that is, that form able to reflect on itself through figures of the divine. Whereas “God as light” was thoroughly indeterminate, where essence or meaning could be immediately presented in any natural thing, where brook, tree, sea, sun, and so on are all reducible to the sensory abstraction of “here” and “now,” the agency of absolute thought (the Idea) now determines nature in specific forms of life. The first level of determination or specificity is within the vegetal and the animal.

In terms of essence or meaning, we are introducing the category of quality here and, because we are discussing the absolute agency of revelation in forms of religious consciousness, the specificity of quality is instantiated in plants and animals as the objects of worship wherein the Absolute appears. Moving beyond the indeterminacy of “here” and “now,” the categories of plants and animals have become the vanishing words of religious experience, where the human and the Absolute may know each other and themselves; they are “vanishing” because, as forms of life, plants and animals are mortal and finite. Further, as more determinate forms of life, their vanishing is more determinately meaningful, more fulfilling than the immediately vanishing essence of “here” and “now.”

That’s the good news. The bad is that determination involves negativity and violence, and, as we saw in Perception, which Hegel refers to in M689 (M3, 507), once the process of qualification and specificity is unleashed, there is no stopping it. Thus, “the religion of spiritual perception... falls apart into the numberless multiplicity of weaker and stronger, richer and poorer spirits” (ibid.). Indeed, this is the same onto-logic that we observed in the Perception chapter, where the effort to determine a substance through its properties broke down into an infinity of indeterminate qualities. I try to determine salt as something white but whiteness is a generality, as are the qualities of bitterness, crystalline, condiment, and so on. Here, the flower-like state of “innocence” (ibid.), where we took the perceived thing as itself a simple substance, breaks down into a fury of conflicting properties.

What we are after, of course, is to simply anchor essence or meaning in something that lasts, a quest which hopefully I have shown to be thoroughly contradictory, even hypocritical and yet deeply human. Hypocrisy is a feature of Perception that we discovered in that eponymous chapter: the desire to nail down essence appeared there as both sophisticated and hypocritical, an attempt to jealously maintain arbitrary, unilateral predication. Adherence to such properties is ultimately meaningless since meaning or essence arises only from vanishing words. The essential “vanishing” of properties or qualities (white, into whiteness; crystal, into crystalline; etc.) *is* their essence or meaning. The struggle to nail down essence will be carried on in the next section, “The artificer [architect]” (M691/W3, 508), where it will become clear that the effort to forestall and stunt words in their vanishing produces only dead signs.

In the worship of plant-life, the religious practitioner celebrates the “passivity and impotence of contemplative individuality” (M689), in both himself and his object. The believer naively predicates vegetative substance without acknowledging the subjectivity that has been invested in it through the very act of worshipful predication. In fact, it is just such determinative predication that carries out the move to an animal kingdom of worship where contemplative individuality breaks down into “the earnestness of warring life” (ibid.). Why? Because determination *is* subjectivity. As such, it bespeaks the “manifoldness of being-for-self” (ibid.), which is Hegel-speak for the conflictual diversity of individual, subjective freedom. Animal worship will thus appear as “the negativity that encroaches upon the innocent indifference of plant life” (ibid.). The warring subjectivity of animal worship carries a necessary element of absolutism because, as worship, it conjoins

expressions of both human and absolute spirit. Human religious agency appears to be informed by the revelatory agency of the Absolute itself.

In the Perception chapter, the conflicting, self-contradictory multiplication of properties appeared as both an epistemological critique of empiricism and a harmless, existentially human attempt to sophistically hold on to things (and oneself), to forestall their vanishing. Here, in religion, the expression of "warring" qualities is decidedly weightier because we are discussing forms of worship, forms which are necessarily communal/societal, historical, and informed by absolute agency. Consequently, when different animal "spirits" are worshipped, they bring about forms of worship that produce their own communities, thus creating "a host of separate, antagonistic national spirits who hate and fight each other to the death" (M689). Each tribe has its totem; each clan, its animal emblem; each nation, its flag and anthem; all of which are just so many essential properties, judged as "weaker and stronger, richer and poorer" and essentially at war with the others. As expressions of absolute essence, the stakes cannot be higher.

Is this not familiar to us, how the purest, most flower-like innocence of "individual" (M689) religious contemplation (of revelation) becomes a fury of war-making "destruction" (M690) when it becomes enfolded in an essentially *specific* or particular community? Such warring communities of worship are the linguistic instantiations of both human and absolute predication, where individual forms remain hypocritically anchored in the self-assignment of particular properties. Such communal configurations have not yet attained the speculative realization of the fulfilled copula, in its performative ambiguity and hermeneutical openness. Such openness is afforded by the fundamental *otherness* of the human-divine difference as it enlivens the identity of communal religious forms of consciousness. Conceptions of worship that are assimilated into exclusive cultural expressions of "national" (M689) or cultural specificity are self-contradictory, dangerous, and insufficient in terms of the speculative goal of religion itself, a goal which is attained only when the substantial features of worship abandon their hypocritical recalcitrance and acknowledge the contractual reality of their own essential vanishing.

The Architect (Werkmeister, M691)

Meaning is essentially ambiguous; as such, it is hermeneutically open and thus dialogical and communal. Meaning arises out of vanishing words, whose significance is not nailed down in dead signs. As we saw in Perception, sophistical dogmatism seeks to hold on to and monopolize the meaning of words through the introduction of properties. In Perception, I associated the idea of "property" with its appearance in the *Philosophy of Right*, where, as an expression of the individual will, it is meant to be more permanent and real than mere affirmations of possession. In property, I am meant to hold the deed to something, to have it in writing. This written feature is supposed to represent a step beyond simply claiming something, which relies on the bare statement: "This is mine." Similarly, here in religion, worship of living things through their properties (strong, pure, loyal,

national, etc.) is meant to represent a step beyond the abstraction of meaning as *mein-ung* that we witnessed in “God as light,” where my contemplative, individual worship can be seen as an act of mutual possession between the worshipper and the natural thing worshipped. In the religion of light, I am possessed by the divine, which, in turn, is possessed by me through my individual experience of the sacred, natural thing.

However, as we saw in Perception, and as we just saw in plant and animal religion, properties are unstable. They “fall apart into numberless multiplicity” (M689). The reason, referring again to the *Philosophy of Right*, is that my written deed to something is worthless if it is not recognized by another, a recognition that is only instantiated in the contract, whereby my property is actually ceded to another will. Of course, such a ceding involves property’s alienation, surrender, or vanishing. To put this another way, the contract represents a first instance of the type of dialogical ambiguity that we found in the move from Perception to law, as expressed in the Force and Understanding chapter. Indeed law, as we have seen repeatedly throughout our investigation of the *Phenomenology*, is a stand-in for the dialogical ambiguity that will attain greater levels of speculative reality in the fulfilled copula. In law, the hard, bipolar relation between subject and predicate, wherein determinacy is meant to flow unilaterally, in one direction, is shown repeatedly by Hegel, to be ambiguous. Force may just as easily explain its utterance as the utterance explains the force. In bringing to light the inherent ambiguity in law, Hegel dissolves the hard, exclusive oppositions that are the fruit of the understanding (*Verstand*).

The same dynamic is at play in the *Werkmeister*, where once again the unilateral “form of the understanding” (M691/W3, 508) is predominant. Indeed, the architect, on the building site, lays down the law, and although we might assign this section to the anthropology of ancient Egypt, through the references to “pyramids and obelisks” (*ibid.*), the fact that Hegel also refers to the stone of Mecca shows that the anthropological references are fluid. Although the Egyptian reference does provide metaphorical insights into the language of worship, as we will see, the most revealing aspect of the section is expressed in Hegel’s reference to “crystals” (*ibid.*), that is, to the “straight lines with plane surfaces and equal proportions” (*ibid.*) that characterize the “rigid” (*ibid.*) forms that are here involved in worship. So, how can the rigid structure of the crystal reflect the ambiguity of law?

The answer can be found by referring to the *Philosophy of Nature*, where Hegel presents crystals in terms of essence, a relation that I explore in my article on *Comets and Moons* (Reid, 2013/14). In the *Philosophy of Nature*, essential ambiguity (i.e., meaning) arises within the hard, recalcitrant crystal, in the form of colorful light, which, according to Hegel’s (Goethean) theory of color, is produced by the chiaroscuro interplay between dark and light. Similarly, here, in the “Natural religion” section, the “darkness of thought” and the “clarity of utterance” (M697/W3, 511) are the crystalline reflections produced by revelatory light. The two facets can be found in the light/dark opposition that we observed between the passivity of the worshipped plant (flower) and animal violence, and now, in the *Werkmeister*, in the interplay between the light and dark surfaces within the

sacred, architecturally conceived crystalline structure. As is the case with the natural crystal itself, the interplay between contrasting surfaces and planes shines forth as the colorful reflection of essence (or meaning) *for us*. However, within the crystalline form itself, the play of light simply occurs as the reflection against an inner darkness, an empty appearance (*Schein*) that is not yet a meaningful, colorful phenomenon (*Erscheinung*) that shines forth *for us*.

Such "colorful" meaning is ambiguous, as was the case in law generally. And although ambiguity is a feature of dialogical interpretation and therefore, in the religious context, of hermeneutical text and worship, here, it is the *Werkmeister*, the architect who personifies mediation and determines meaning. "The architect unites the two [light and dark] by blending the natural and the self-conscious shape," creating an "ambiguous being that is a riddle to itself," and impenetrable to others. The architect thus brings forth "a language of a profound but scarcely intelligible wisdom" (M697), one that only he is capable of interpreting. Because such a language is determined and can only be understood by the architect himself, the form of communal worship that is brought about here is stunted, devoid of the free interplay of hermeneutical openness. Meaning is unilaterally assigned by the architect.

In the section's own terms, such crystalline, sacred works "lack the shape and outer reality in which the self exists as self" (M695/W3, 510). Linguistically, the straight lines and surfaces of the architectural structures are blank or mute; they lack "language [*Sprach*], the element in which the fulfilled meaning [would be] itself present" (ibid.). The sacred monuments do not speak out. Their crystalline structure lacks "human form" (ibid.). In a reference that might easily pertain to something like Stonehenge, the evoked architectural constructions are "soundless shapes" that require the "rays of the rising sun" (i.e., the external agency of revelation) "in order to have sound," which, like the wind whistling between sarsen stones, "is merely noise and not language" (ibid.).

The pyramid metaphor is nonetheless helpful in furthering the linguistic reading of "The Architect" in terms of predication, signs, words, and meaning, a metaphor explored by Jacques Derrida in his "The Pit and the Pyramid" (*Margins of Philosophy*, 1982). For our purposes, we can say that, within the crystalline form of the architect's pyramid, meaning subsists only as "an alien, departed spirit" (M692/W3, 508), as something "dead that takes up abode in this lifeless crystal" (ibid.). Since, in Religion, we are dealing with the predicative agency of the absolute, we can say that when such predication is instantiated in monumental, architectural structures, these should be taken as pure linguistic signs detached from their inner meaning. The crystalline structures that are worshipped remain "lifeless" because meaning lies dead and detached within them, like a mummified god/pharaoh, as something alien and arbitrarily assigned.

I have likened the relationship between predicative agency and the immediate, natural sign to the relation between soul and body. Only when the two are brought together and are organically integrated do we arrive at the living (vanishing) word as the lively expression of meaning. Thus, when Hegel writes of the need to move beyond the monumental forms of worship and thus of "getting rid of this division

between body and soul” and moving on to forms that “clothe and give shape to soul in its own self, and [...] endow body with soul” (M693/W3, 509), he is referring to onto-grammatical relations. In the first case, when the sign remains stubbornly fixated in its rigid, lunar immediacy, meaning remains detached, dead and only arbitrarily assigned, in a unilateral, abstract manner.

The two [i.e. meaning and sign] have to be united. [In the pyramid form, t]he soul of the statue in human shape does not yet come forth from the inner being, is not yet language, the outer existence that is in its own self inward; and the inner being of multiform existence is still mute. (M697/W3, 511)

In fact, in “The Architect,” the arbitrary relation between sign and meaning produces a hybrid creature, one which might be understood as referring to the hieroglyphic forms of half-human, half animal figures. However, in a more contemporary vein, perhaps the persistent non-vanishing sign is best reread as a kind of un-dead creature, soulless inside but whose body lives on, refusing to die, indeed creating “monsters of shape, word and deed” (M698), as Hegel writes. The move to the living and therefore vanishing word remains still to come, in a figure of worship whose lines are distinctly spiritual, that is, *human*, as we will find in the next section, “Religion as a form of art” (M699/W3, 512).

It is important to see, in the religious context where the predicative agency of the absolute is at play, that what Hegel means by “art” is first of all classical, Greco-Roman sculpture, where the gods are sculpted by humans, into human form. In the classical religious sculpture, the lines are no longer rigid, straight, and crystalline. Now, meaning (qua essence, soul) informs the curved, elliptical sculpted shapes themselves, bringing about a lifelike organic union that more adequately presages the spiritual complicity between the human and the absolute Other: a form of worship that expresses what Hegel calls absolute spirit.

Die Kunstreligion: *Religion in the Form of Art (Greece)*

In order to understand the *Kunstreligion* section, we must pay particular attention to the five introductory paragraphs (M699–704), because there Hegel outlines, in compressed, conceptual form that is *for us*, Hegelian *Phenomenologists*, the beginnings of (sacred) art and its elenchus in religion. The “form of art” arises when the hard, crystalline surfaces and lines of the sacred architectural structure, together with the riotous life-forms of worshipped plants and animals, combine to form the curved, human shapes of the sculpted Greek gods. In thus producing works that are both human and divine, the “architectural builder” has now raised herself to the status of “spiritual worker.” In other words, rather than the prescribed, rule-based, and habitual activity that Hegel sees as productive of sacred monuments, an activity that he qualifies as “instinctive, like the building of a honeycomb by bees” (M691/W3, 508), the classical sculptor’s work is instead a “self-conscious activity” (M699). The reason for this new quality is simply that the

human sculptor/artist may recognize herself (i.e., her freedom) in her work. We might say that she has moved from the abstract status of master (*Werk-meister*) to the status of slave, which, in terms of self-consciousness's narrative of freedom, is a good thing, as we saw in that eponymous chapter.

It should be made clear that although we are dealing with forms of self-consciousness, here, we are not looking at this artistic figure (the artist and her work) from the earlier point of view of the individual. We are not even looking at the question of artistic self-consciousness from the point of view of "all individuals" (M700/W3, 512); rather, we are looking at the issue from the point of view of spirit, both human and absolute. In other words, in Religion, we are looking at how the self-consciousness of the Absolute, through its revelatory agency, is integrated with human spirit in its own self-knowing activity. Spirit is *de facto* communal and historical. Consequently, in the context of Religion, the form of self-consciousness that we are addressing is not personally individual but rather, "the free nation in which hallowed custom constitutes the substance of all, whose actuality and existence each and everyone knows to be his own will and deed" (M700). Consequently, the spiritual work of the classical sculptor goes beyond the human form of the stone sculpture that she creates. It is the immediate cultural expression of her people (*Volk*), as national custom. The human/divine sculpted figure comes alive in the forms of customary worship that instantiate its spirituality in the world.

Nonetheless, in spite of its role in communal liveliness, the classical work of art remains, at least initially, stone-like and monolithic. Just as the statue itself is devoid of *real* life, the community of immediate custom that worships it "lives in immediate unity with its substance" (M701/W3, 513). Such a community remains in "passive unchangeableness" (*ibid.*), while enjoying the "contented acceptance of custom and [a] firm trust therein" (*ibid.*). What is missing in the cultural expression of this figure of immediate spiritual community is *difference*, the agency of differentiating otherness in the form of "free selfhood" (*ibid.*), or "the pure individuality of self-consciousness" (*ibid.*) or, again, "free self-consciousness" (*ibid.*).

The dialectic between the two unilaterally opposed elements, that is, between the "stable existence and settled truth" (M701) of the uniform community of cultural nationhood, on one hand, and the "absolute unrest" (*ibid.*) of free self-consciousness, on the other, is played out in the tragedy of *Antigone*. However, it is important to see that while the actual character Antigone may be associated with fixed cultural custom, through the laws of the hearth, we can just as easily grasp things as "changed around" (*ibid.*), where it is now Creon's understanding of civic "rights and duties" (*ibid.*) that is taken as an expression of immediate custom. The ambiguity between the two positions is, once again, a feature of Hegelian "law," that is, the fact that it acts as a stand-in for speculative reality.

In fact, what must be retained is not so much the content of Antigone's challenge but rather her actual rebellion against the assumed (male) order of things. As such, her revolt is an expression of joyous individual freedom and oppositional difference within and against a unitary community of shared belief. Her Socratic

insurgency is conceived as a Bacchic revel, as “the freest enjoyment of itself” (M701) as an “absolute levity” and an “unrestrained joyfulness” (ibid.). Indeed, Hegel seems to present Antigone’s revolt as the classical Greek expression of what the Situationist rebels of *mai* ‘68 expressed in their popular slogan, “Jouir sans entraves!” (pleasure without restraints!). In more sober Hegelian parlance, we can conceive her rebellion as a form of what I have been calling “cometary negativity,” the fluidifying action of “dissolution” brought to bear against the fixed, lunar, and statuesque ethical order, which thus “passes away” and “perishes” (ibid.).

This is the end of art (or at least one of them) in Hegel: the end of the classical Greek artform. The individual, man-made, sculptures of the man-god (or rather, gods), in which the absolute reveals itself, together with the community that reflects the sculptures’ natural immediacy in its unquestioning and fixed forms of worship, perish through the riotous agency of selfhood. Such agency, as expressed in the sacred artform of classical tragedy, is extra-human: it bespeaks the revelation of the Absolute itself. Briefly, in Religion, Antigone’s insurgency reveals the Absolute’s free, subjective act of substantial predication, the speculative “counter-thrust,” which can be seen as the joyful, cometary overwhelming of the stone-like status quo. Art ends here simply because the immediacy of its individual spiritual forms (its sculptures, its tragedies) is inadequate to the *absolute* otherness predicated in them. The “perishing” of the always individual artform is its vanishing and, indeed, its crucifixion.

Although such a conclusion may be surprising, what Hegel is clearly presenting here, in *Kunstreligion*, is the idea that Christ is the last, final piece of ancient (Greco-Roman) art, not as a representation but in the natural/divine singularity of Christ himself. He is the truly “crucial” art object. This is what is meant by the expression “in such an epoch, absolute art makes its appearance” (M702/W3, 514), along with testamentary references to “the night in which substance was betrayed” (M703), and the “pathos” [Passion] (M704), which further reinforce this reading. If, indeed, “spirit has fled from its body” (M704) in order to be a spirit “resurrected as a shape freed from nature and its own immediate existence” (M703), it is in order that spirit can “transcend art in order to gain a higher representation of itself” (M702) in revealed religion. Indeed, religion per se is impossible without the end of art, where its all-to-natural signs of worship come to “suffer violence” (704/W3, 515) and vanish.

The last work of (classical) art is the one living, human form, the necessarily temporal, temporary cohabitation of the human shape and the indwelling of the absolute spirit in a finite, natural form. No longer a sign, it is the vanishing word and indeed the Word itself as absolute meaning. I have presented meaning as always ambiguous, always speculatively informed by identity and otherness. Absolute meaning must therefore arise where the absolute Other predicates itself in the highest form of *human* spirit, in the most perfect work of art: “the individual body which spirit selected to be the vessel of its sorrow” (M704).

The forms of worship that are involved in the *Kunstreligion* section turn around the different onto-grammatical forms evoked. To put this differently, the forms of worship are communal instantiations arising within the different configurations of

the copula, between the predicative agency of the absolute and the forms of human spirit where the Absolute *finds itself* thus revealed. Once again, worship (*Cultus*) is the communal form of human and absolute self-consciousness. The forms of worship informed by stone statues of the human-shaped gods are themselves fixed and static, based on unquestioned, customary duties and practices. They bespeak the nagging *persistence* of these customs, in the forms of fixed linguistic signs. The Bacchic insurgency of pure difference, exemplified by Antigone, brings about “the loss of [the fixed] world” (M701), the overcoming of the signs/bodies of its articles of worship and the “resurrection of spirit” as “its own essence [meaning]” (M701). Since it is she who brings about the end of (classical) art and gives birth of a new form of absolute spirit (in Revealed Religion and its form of worship), perhaps we might say that it is Antigone who acts as the speculative mother of God!

The Abstract Work of Art (M705-19)

According to the idea of revelation through the Absolute's predicative agency, which we are discussing in Religion, it is important to note that in the first subsection of *Kunstreligion*, “the abstract work of art,” a new revelatory dimension is introduced into the sculpted art object: language. The gods now *speak* to us, the Absolute no longer reveals itself to us in natural signs, even though the signs may espouse the human form and be formed by human workers. In a possible (anachronistic) reference to Hesiod's theogony, we find that “the form of the gods” has lost its “nature-element,” which is now only “a dim memory” (M707/W3, 516). The form of the gods now exists in the “higher element... language” (M710/W3, 518). Whereas, in the art object “as a thing” or sign, essence or meaning lay within, and separate from the object's “outer existence” (*ibid.*), now, in sacred language, inner meaning has “at the same time an outer existence” (*ibid.*). Briefly, in Hegel's terms, language is here “an outer reality that is immediately [a] self-conscious existence” (*ibid.*).

Nonetheless, Hegel distinguishes between the raw language of the “oracle” (M711), which is presented as a primitive form of divine utterance, where the absolute's revelation is articulated in a language that, in its immediacy, remains infected with a natural element, and devotional language. Not only does the former “draw upon knowledge of the contingent from birds, or trees or the yeasty earth” (M712/W3, 519), but it invests such knowledge in the stone bodies of the statuesque gods. On the other hand, devotional language takes place in the shared language of hymns and incantations; it is more spiritual than the oracular utterance because its communal aspect involves a differentiated, reciprocal relationship in the essential copula between the human and the divine. Pagan devotional language is speculative in a primitive sense. Whereas the oracle's words are only heard by the individual soothsayer, devotional language is shared. Pagan hymn-singing and incantation involve a form of worship where, “devotion, kindled in the manifold units of self-consciousness, is conscious of its act as the consciousness of all” (M710). As we have seen repeatedly, speculative ambiguity brings about forms of community. In the devotional community, the language of revelation is

echoed in the linguistic forms of human worship. Here, meaning arises through the vanishing of words.

Indeed, this is precisely what Hegel is expressing in M713 (W3, 521), where he distinguishes between the oracular language of an “alien” god and the devotional language of communal worship, and does so in the explicit terms of vanishing words.

The true self-conscious existence which spirit receives in language... is not the utterance of an alien [being]... [i.e.] the work of art that we met before [in oracular language]. [Devotional language] stands in contrast to the thing-like character of the statue. Whereas this sort exists at rest, language is a vanishing existence.

The natural, immediate “objectivity” (M713) of the linguistic sign (here, the statue) has now been invested with ambiguous meaning (e.g., self-consciousness) to form the vanishing word, whose reality is no longer confined to the stone-like sign determined by alien, oracular predication, but instantiated and performed in the community of worship. The community of worship is essentially a linguistic entity whose objectivity is of a higher speculative order than that which we discovered in the linguistic sign. Indeed, the *Cultus* attains the status of actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), which, as we saw earlier, in the religious community evoked at the end of Morality, is that form of human striving that is informed (qua spirit) by the Absolute, without ever attaining it. Why? Because, the vanishing quality of language ensures that meaning will never be entirely fixed, never entirely “at rest,” always alive and changing, always dying but never dead.

A feature of human actuality is, of course, its temporality, and in the crucial M713 paragraph that I quoted above, Hegel refers to the vanishing quality of words in temporal terms: devotional words appear “like time,” in that they are “no longer immediately present in the very moment of [their] being present.” Since vanishing informs religious actuality, as the locus of self-conscious human and absolute agency, we can understand how temporality is an essential feature of it and of *Wirklichkeit* per se. Vanishing explains how human actuality is characterized, in Hegel, by endless striving, within time. It also explains, reciprocally, how the Absolute can become temporal, taking place in time and in history, rather than pouring itself out instantaneously, in an eternal “Now.” Further, the vanishing quality of words explains how actuality can be meaningful.

Nonetheless, the community of worship that is presented in the first articulation of *Kunstreligion*, in “The abstract work of art,” is one built on custom and duty, as we saw above, at the beginning of *Kunstreligion*. It is an immediate, pagan tribal entity which knows that its essence lies in “the sure and unwritten law of the gods, a law that is ‘everlasting and no one knows whence it came,’” writes Hegel, quoting from *Antigone* (M712). The communal form evoked in this context is thus one of immediate identity, indeed of uncompromising tribal nationalism. Here, “the honour and glory enjoyed by the god... are the honour and glory of the nation (*Volkes*)” (M719/W3, 524). The associated form of worship is primarily

one of sacrifice, to the nation and thus to god. "In witnessing to his glory and in bringing him gifts, the nation has the immediate enjoyment of its own wealth and adornment" (ibid.). While the form of worship invoked here is indeed spiritual, since it takes place in language and is thus temporal, vanishing, and meaningful, nonetheless, the language of (pagan) hymns and incantations has its speculative limitations. Specifically, it brings about a community of belief, of worship that remains the expression of identity. Indeed, the communal shared words appear as the direct, sacred echoes of absolute revelation, that is, the linguistic forms of the Absolute's predicative agency, articulated through the human shape of the cult.

The logic of sacrifice describes the onto-grammatical relation between the Absolute and the linguistic actuality of the religious community as artform, in its hymns and incantations. These are immediately and unquestioningly sacred. They are national/tribal hymns or anthems (or soccer supporter chants, etc.) and must be sung in unison. As language, they are an expression of the tribal custom as "unwritten law." As is the case with law generally, in Hegel, we observe in such linguistic expressions an ambiguity that is a mere stand-in for speculative mediation and differentiation, in the copula. Since, in the tribal hymns and incantations, the Absolute is predicated directly into the community of belief, the people (*Volk*) and their religious practices become themselves immediate echoes of it, as I wrote above. Consequently, there is no differentiation between what is, on one hand, "religious," that is, what constitutes "worship" and thus forms "national" custom or culture, and, on the other hand, what we might call "the political," that is, the human social space of debate and difference. In fact, the nation itself becomes an individual, sacred work of art, devoid of political difference. It is the predicate of the divine but where the form of worship has not yet fully embodied meaning as a vanishing word. To put this another way still, the nation as unified *Volk* appears as the unilateral work of revelation, whose reality, qua sign, presents itself not as vanishing but rather, as "everlasting" (M712), unquestioned, and permanent. As a sign rather than a word.

What is lacking in the incantatory community of worship as artwork is the agency of (human) reason. It is this agency that the character Antigone will bring to bear, in the riotous, even anarchic, form of "Bacchic frenzy" (M726/W3, 528) that I introduced above. This revolt or insurgency of "undisciplined revelry" (M725) is essentially corporeal in nature: "Here we have the abstract moment of the living corporeality of essence" where the living human body "puts itself in the place of the statue as the shape that has been raised and fashioned for perfectly free movement" (ibid.). The human insurgency takes place in "the highest bodily representation" (ibid.), in the individual, living human body as a "living work of art that matches strength with its beauty."

Why is it important to stress bodiliness, here, in this context? Because, as we have seen, onto-grammatically, the linguistic sign often presents itself through the phenomenology of the body. As a pure, arbitrary, empty sign, the body stands separate from the soul of predicative meaning. When ensouled with meaning, the sign/body becomes a vanishing word, and, thus informed, takes on a predicative agency of its own. It is a living body that speaks out, one whose meaning always

outstrips its status as a mere (dead) sign. The insurgency of human spirit, against the unitary community of custom, must therefore take place in bodily form. It is the revolt of the body as word, as speaking out, as parrhesia, no longer content with its relegated status of empty sign. In light of this, we should read Antigone herself as no longer a determinable sign but now, a living body that is fully ensouled, actual and speaking out. What I have just described is the narrative content of the section that immediately follows the one we are reading in “The abstract work of art”: the appropriately titled “The living work of art” (M720/W3, 525), where the anarchic revelry of bodiliness is expressed in the “stammer of Bacchic frenzy” (M726/W3, 528) and the insurgent discourse of unlawful difference that introduces itself into the unquestioned laws of national custom.

The Spiritual Work of Art (M727)

Earlier, in Spirit’s “Ethical Order” (M444/W3, 327), we visited the forms of tragedy and comedy as forms of spirit arising in the human, ethical world. In approaching them again, within the Religion chapter, as forms of art, we are looking at tragedy and comedy from the point of view of absolute agency, how the Absolute attains self-consciousness by predicating itself in the human forms of absolute spirit. We have seen how these forms, where human and absolute self-consciousness inform one another, that is, where reason and revelation interact, take place in communities of worship. We have also seen how different expressions of worship involve instantiations of actual, performative language. Previously, such language presented itself in the hymns and incantations of the homogeneous *Cultus* of pagan belief and custom, and then, in Antigone’s Bacchanalian insurgency. We saw how the latter should be seen as the violent introduction of human spirit and freedom, which we associated generally with the activity of reason, into the all-too-sacred community of shared belief, an expression of tribal community that takes *itself* as an immediate form of divine revelation and whose performative language is the hymn or the anthem.

The human, political element introduces the agency of freedom into the unitary instance of nationhood, of the people as *Volk*. Put another way, the self-identical nation must become a differentiated state, one that is fully organic: a system whose lively wholeness is possible through the internal differentiation of its “organs,” which, in turn, are alive within the holistic body-politic. This outcome, which is developed in Hegel’s *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*, is not afforded in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where, as we saw in our earlier discussion of the Ethical Order, political difference is only introduced into the beautiful individuality of the pagan, tribal community in the radical, binary form of tragedy. As we also saw, such radical, uncompromising, tragic difference cannot help but collapse into the in-difference of the comedic world of juridical personhood that Hegel associates with ancient Rome.

The binary difference of tragedy, as a primitive form of political differentiation, comes about through the opposition between the customary laws of family over against those of the primitive state or, in other words, between national tradition

and the state, between private and public spheres, between the hearth and the agora, between woman and man. It is tempting, in the religious context where we find ourselves to see the law that is upheld by Antigone (of the Penates) as representing the agency of revelation, of the Absolute or the divine, and conversely, the "state" laws of Creon as representing the human element of reason. However, I do not think that is really Hegel's point. Rather, it is the *conflict* between the two laws (provoked by Antigone's insurgency) that is the essence of the actual political element under discussion, and which is thus reflective of human spirit per se. That is why we are dealing, in tragedy, in the Religion chapter, with the "*spiritual* work of art."

In other words, on one level, both Antigone and Creon represent differing visions of what is necessary from an unquestioning and customary point of view. What is pertinent in their confrontation is the opposition itself, an opposition that arises within spirit and is the very essence of what we call political life. Such "life" will eventually, in the *Philosophy of Right*, prove itself to be organic, that is, embodying the *articulated* difference between the public and the private, but not yet. Here, tragedy, as a primitive form of conflictual difference, expresses the unilateral agency of human reason qua spirit in its endlessly unfinished, political actuality. This actuality is principally linguistic and performative: "the higher language of tragedy" (M733/W3, 534), as we recall. Briefly put, the performance of Greek tragedy should be seen as a form of worship but only if we take it as thoroughly political.

In presenting tragedy this way, as the fruit of human spirit, we seem to be leaving out an essential element, one that is necessary if we are really to understand tragedy, in the Religion chapter, as a form of worship, where absolute agency is involved in its self-conscious self-knowing. Where is the Absolute? Where does it occur in "the spiritual artwork"? In Hegel's reading, it can be found, not in the antagonists, in either Antigone or Creon, for example, but rather in the *chorus* and, above all, in the figure of Zeus. For what both the chorus and Zeus have in common is that they represent fate. The agency of the Absolute (revelation) takes place, in tragedy, as the alien fate to be suffered by the antagonists.

The role of fate is crucial in *Antigone*, and in tragedy generally, since it expresses the predetermined storyline, the narrative closure that is integral to the absolute point of view. As I have mentioned before, it is this perspective that provides the closure without which the *Phenomenological* account of spirit would remain fixed in the endless striving of actuality. Fate implies that the tragic story of binary difference and conflict has an ending beyond the prescribed strivings of the antagonists, thus ensuring narrative systematicity. In fact, the necessity of fate acts as a stand-in for the speculative mediation (as we have seen in "law" generally) that is possible only when the absolute predicate takes on the role of determining subject. Therefore, saying that Zeus and the chorus express the fate that awaits Antigone and Creon means that Zeus and the chorus express the predicative (revelatory) agency of the Absolute, of what was hitherto the determinable reality of substance. However, for the spiritual work of art to constitute a form of worship, it must also involve the human, spiritual side of the story, which is presented in the conflictual actuality of the antagonists, for example, Antigone and Creon.

The alien nature of fate, embodied in the bearded Zeus, reveals the limitations of that “higher language” of tragedy, in terms of religion and worship (absolute self-consciousness through human forms of spirit). In spite of its advance over earlier forms of pagan worship (oracular, hymnal, and epic), the language of tragedy does not yet incorporate its meaning as a vanishing word, in the fullest sense. From the point of view of (human) spirit, tragedy represents an account whose meaning is predicated onto it by the outside agency of the Absolute qua fate. As the performative expression of human societal reality, tragedy plays out the radical difference that informs political actuality at its most fundamental level. However, the outcome and the meaning of the conflict remain beyond the grasp of the human antagonists themselves because the conflict, like the fundamental opposition that informs it, remains unresolved within the drama itself. The lively, human interplay, which is expressed in the tragic form of worship, is levelled out by the alien hand of fate, whose product is the form of in-difference that Hegel refers to as Roman comedy. Comedy should thus be comprehended as the absolute leveling out of all worldly difference, where great and small, good and mean, powerful and weak, and so on all come to the same fate.

How are we to understand this comedic outcome in terms of words and signs? The language of tragedy is obviously spiritual. As a human expression of spirit, performed in the historical moment of classical Greece, its language is meaningful, comprising vanishing words, infinitely ambiguous and hermeneutically open. Nonetheless, the evocation of tragedy here, as a form of absolute spirit, tells us something more. In the Religion chapter, as a language of worship, formative of a community where the human and the absolute know themselves through each other, there is a general insufficiency. As an expression of revelation, of the self-revealed absolute, the tragic text itself does not fully embody its own sacred meaning. If it did, it would already be revealed religion. Rather, religion, in its *artistic* form, remains predicated and informed by an alien source whose truth lies beyond its actual words.

To put this another way, in the tragic art form, absolute essence qua meaning plays itself out behind the backs of the human protagonists, behind their actual words. On some level, they do not say what they mean, a meaning that is only grasped by the chorus, by Zeus and ultimately by the speculative philosopher who comprehends the play in its truth. However, such a grasp already implies the end of art as a form adequate to absolute (sacred) content. The art object must constitute a vanishing word in the speculative sentence between the human and the divine, between reason and revelation. As I have already mentioned, this ending of art in the vanishing word is or rather *has been* the singular, ensouled embodiment of Christ.

Pagan worship always involves an external relation between the sacred art object and the absolute otherness of meaning or essence. This is still the case even when the object takes the spiritual form of language. In the Homeric epic, which Hegel addresses in “the spiritual work of art,” just prior to his presentation of tragedy, human spirit is indeed present in the trials of Agamemnon, Ajax, Odysseus, and even the monstrous Achilles. The words of the story recount the struggles of

human spirit and are richer than the strictly revelatory discourse of the oracle or the immediate human–divine bond expressed in the tribal hymn. Nonetheless, in the epic, the externality of absolute meaning (essence) is found in the figure of the “muse,” without whose revelatory inspiration there would be no story. For the epic artist (Homer), “what counts is not his own [human] self but his muse, his universal song” (M729/W3, 530). Compared with the externality of divine agency in the epic, tragedy comprises a “higher language” because it brings divine agency down to earth, in the actual verb (chorus, Zeus) of the play. Thus, tragedy “gathers closer together the dispersed moments of the inner essential world [of the divine] and the [human] world of action” (M733/W3, 534). In the onto-grammatical terms appropriate to the figures of worship that we are discussing here, in tragedy there is less distance than we see in the Homeric epic, between the communally celebrated linguistic signs that are necessarily embodied in the language of worship, and the absolute meaning that informs them.

In fact, the “gathering closer” of the human and the divine, which is staged in the *Cultus* of tragedy, is what brings about its demise and its passage into comedy. Indeed, in comedy, “[t]he actual self of the actor coincides with what he impersonates, just as the spectator is completely at home in the drama performed before him and sees himself playing in it” (M747/W3, 544). Comedy, which I have described as the form of in-indifference arising from the collapse of the radical binary difference of tragedy, is a kind of self-satisfied “repose” (ibid.). While “the complete loss of fear” (ibid.) that comedy occasions may seem like a good thing, even a consummation devoutly to be wished, it bespeaks the total loss of meaning, or, as Hegel puts it, the absence of “essential being in all that is alien” (ibid.). Indeed, the form of worship invoked in comedy can be nothing other than the self-celebration of juridical individuality, which we approached in our earlier discussion of Roman personhood. Here, “it is the individual consciousness in the certainty of itself that exhibits itself as this absolute power” (ibid.). The political configuration brought about by such individuality should again, in the Religion context, be thought of as a form of worship, where the absolute meets the human. In that regard, the world of comedy can only produce “this demos, the general mass, which knows itself as lord and ruler” (M745/W3, 542).

The figure of the demos, a figure that we can understand as the abstraction of “the people” invoked in contemporary populism, is distinct from the earlier tribal figure of community that we encountered in the hymnal community of shared custom. Here, the comedic demos is a worshipful celebration of individuality, to the point where the demos per se should be understood as individuality itself, as *the individual*.

I introduced the revelatory agency of the Absolute, in Religion, by referring to it in terms of absolute otherness. Such otherness, qua difference, is reflected, to a greater or lesser degree, in the forms of human spirit that we have encountered. For example, in tragedy, the otherness of the Absolute’s revelatory agency, over against the human agency of reason, participates (as the chorus, as Zeus) in the actual drama, in the conflict between Antigone and Creon, and in the spiritual world in which the tragic drama is performed. Indeed, tragedy is the only institution

of difference within the classical Greek polis. The individualism of Roman personhood and the demos that results from it play out a new relation between the Absolute and the human, one characterized by the absence of distance between the divine and the human, informing what Hegel calls comedy. Looking at the figures of absolute spirit (where the Absolute comingles with the human) is a way of recognizing the crucial nature of the absolute Other, and therefore of difference generally, in the communal/societal forms that Hegel portrays throughout the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Onto-grammatically, in Religion, the human spiritual forms are conceived as the predicates of absolute, revelatory agency. As such, these forms vacillate ambiguously between their linguistic determinations as signs and words, an alternance depending on the ensoulment and liveliness of the predication at play, that is, the extent to which their meaning is integral to them rather than being arbitrarily assigned. Of course, such integrated meaning can never be definitively captured, and so, as lively, words are essentially mortal. Conceiving human spiritual forms as *words* recognizes both their meaningful ensoulment and their vanishing quality. Once again, this quality is the condition for hermeneutical openness, the fact that meaning is always for-another and thus implies figures of communal/societal spirit.

As we saw in our earlier discussions of the theme, for example, in the Reason chapter, individuality (*Individualität*) is a form of embodied singularity (*Einzelheit*) that refuses the essential vanishing quality of its reality. Its state of “repose” and its “complete loss of fear” (M747) express its stubborn, recalcitrant perdurance. In the grammatical terms that I have been using, the individual (*Individuum*) jealously keeps his meaning to himself, holds on to it, determines it unilaterally and arbitrarily. The irony is that in doing so, the individual relegates himself to the status of lifeless sign. The *absence* of hermeneutical openness that this implies can only bring forth communal/societal figures that are impoverished of speculative difference. On the most absolute and fundamental level, it is in the ambiguous interplay, within the copula, between human spirit (subject/predicate) and the absolute Other (predicate/subject) where hermeneutically open communities may arise.

The indifference of comedy is not to be understood as the definitive truth that results from tragic difference. Rather, it should be apparent that tragedy and comedy are features of actuality, and, as such, vacillate endlessly from one to the other. Indeed, the demos is partly “the nation... and the individuality of the family” (M745/W3, 542) and partly “the rational thinking of the universal” (*ibid.*), just as the same *individual* actors of tragic drama come to embody the comedic collapse of difference between the human and the divine. The “religion of art is consummated (*vollendet*),” when the individual, as *sign* comes to recognize his *fate* for what it truly is, not an alien meaning that is imposed on him but rather, “the negative power in which and through which... the gods... vanish” (M747/W3, 544). Recognition of such a power means recognizing that the truth of individuality itself lies not in its perdurance but, rather, in its own vanishing.

This is the lesson of religion and its attempt to find adequate forms of worship in the forms of art: no matter how spiritual is the shape that art may take, it is always reducible to individual incarnations of the absolute, and the absolute can simply never be contained in forms of individuality. As individual, their fate is their vanishing, even though this destiny may take place behind the backs of the forms themselves, which have a tendency to hang on, to resist, and to persist. This perdurance is a result of their persistent natural character, their “existent nature” and their “specific character” (M747), which I have associated with the character of the linguistic sign. Nonetheless, their individuality directly implies their inescapable finitude, where their meaning outstrips them, only to be comprehended in larger narrative forms. Revealed religion is such a form, as is, above all, philosophical Science.

Revealed Religion (M748)

When one carries out such a novel heuristic enterprise as the onto-grammatical reading of the *Phenomenology* that I am presenting, it is natural to have doubts. Am I really talking about Hegel or has my interpretation become too stretched and tendentious? It is consequently reassuring, for me and perhaps for the reader, to come across the opening paragraphs of Revealed Religion (M748–50), where Hegel summarizes the preceding episodes in precisely the onto-grammatical terms that I have been using. In the first paragraph, for example, the terms of art are “substance,” “subject,” “proposition (*Satz*),” “predicate,” “[human] spirit,” and “essence (*Wesen*),” which Miller translates as “Being,” but which I have been presenting as broadly synonymous with “meaning.”

In approaching the Religion chapter, I have insisted upon the revelatory agency of the Absolute, as distinct from that of human spirit. In M748, Hegel tells us that while, in natural and artistic religion, human spirit has been the determined predicate/substance, as determined by the absolute Subject, in the Roman world of Revealed Religion, human spirit, thus determined, now rediscovers the actual agency of subjectivity that it enjoyed in Chapters 1 through 6. This move was anticipated in the disruptive figure of Antigone. Now, in Revealed Religion, “spirit has advanced from the form of substance to assume that of subject.” In other words, in what might be read as a religious replaying of the master–slave dialectic, in the Roman world where Revealed Religion takes place, we witness a reversal, where, following natural and art religions, human self-consciousness now takes the Absolute as its predicate. This reversal is expressed in the onto-grammatical terms of a (speculative) proposition, one where the predicate now acts as subject.

The result of this revolutionary reversal is a predication where the indifferent “unity” between (human) spirit and the Absolute that we observed in the indifferent world of Roman comedy has “gone right over at the same time to extreme selfhood” (*ibid.*). I take this to mean the following: the Roman world of spirit no longer presents itself as substance that is determined or predicated by the absolute Other (as subject) but rather, the world, now invested with absolute essence, has

usurped absolute selfhood. In doing so, human spirit has become the determining, absolute, predicating subject. In onto-grammatical terms:

The proposition (*Satz*) that expresses this levity runs: "The self is absolute essence [*Wesen*]." The essence, the substance, for which the self was [previously] an accident [predicate], has [now, itself] sunk to the level of predicate.

Hegel continues his onto-grammatical reading of comedic, Roman actuality in the next paragraph (M749/W3, 545), where he again refers to comedy's definitive proposition: "The self is absolute essence." Such a proposition, writes Hegel, affirms the exclusive agency of human spirit. In this sense, it "belongs quite obviously to the non-religious actual [*wirklich*] spirit," specifically, to the onto-grammatical, worldly reality of juridical personhood, "the condition of right or law" (M753/W3, 547). However, Hegel immediately cautions that we should not forget the religious context (of absolute spirit) in which the comedic proposition is expressed, that is, in the context of the Absolute's revelatory agency, where the selfhood of the world has been conversely lowered "to the level of a predicate" and where "[absolute] substance is elevated to subject."

The confusing interplay that I have just presented, between the human and the divine, at play in the Roman world, expresses a speculative ambiguity in the subject–predicate relation, which has not yet been happily reconciled in a form of religious community of shared belief but rather presents itself here as the figure of unhappy consciousness, where the two contrary readings of the proposition are unreconciled. The one, which comprehends the Absolute as the substantial subject determining the selfhood of human spirit as its accidental predicate, can be likened to Stoicism; the other, where the selfhood of (human) spirit assumes the role of absolute subject, to skepticism. Indeed, the unhappy consciousness lives in the world of comedic immanence, where the human self is promoted to "absolute essence," while being, at the same time, haunted by the memory of "the total loss" (*ibid.*) of its essential substantiality, which is now "completely alienated" (*ibid.*). Briefly, in becoming all Self, human spirit has lost its objective meaning. This is the *actual* world where Revealed Religion takes place, a reference to *Wirklichkeit* that I will return to below.

Before continuing with my discussion of the onto-grammatical elements in Revealed Religion, I have to make a remark about Miller's translation, which I have been referring to (sometimes with slight alterations) throughout this study. Before doing so, let me say that I have nothing but respect for his work translating a book that is challengingly ambiguous in the original. It is too easy to criticize the efforts of philosophical translators simply because they interpret original texts in a way that is hermeneutically different from one's own. If anything at all is retained from the present study, it should be its argument for hermeneutical openness!

Nonetheless, here, in Revealed Religion, the problem that I mentioned above, in passing, really becomes unbearable and seriously impedes the comprehension of the text itself: Miller's use of "Being" to translate *Wesen*. While each translator is entitled to their choices, where choice is offered, they should at least obey one rule: to

consistently translate original terms into the second language. Thus, Miller's tendency to *sometimes* translate *Wesen* in terms of essence but more often as Being is misleading. This is particularly the case, since Hegel also introduces the term *Sein*, which is also translated as "Being" in its counter-distinction to "Essence" (*Wesen*) (M763/W3, 555). For the purposes of my investigation, where I have associated the metaphysical term "essence" with the more linguistically understandable term "meaning," the translation is particularly pernicious.

Basically, my interpretation turns upon the idea that meaning (essence) arises out of vanishing, an onto-logical dynamic that is recurrent in the Revealed Religion section. Thus "absolute essence" should be understood as the "absolute meaning" arising from the vanishing of the godly *word*, that is, in the vanishing of the individual human god that is Christ. Such a significant disappearance overreaches the end of the historical, existing individual Jesus, whose natural death (of his body) should be read in terms of the linguistic sign. Briefly, in his death, Christ is no longer a sign but *the* essential and absolutely meaning-ful Word. By translating *Wesen* as "Being," the translator occults the essential vanishing that gives rise to such meaning (essence). Even more perniciously, by using the term "Being," the translation wrongly emphasizes (particularly through the term's capitalization), the substantial permanence that directly misrepresents Hegel's idea of *Wesen* as that which is *gewesen* (has been), the idea that meaning arises from the (always vanishing) word and not from the linguistic sign per se.

The death of god, as an existing, natural, individual man, is what the whole section of Revealed Religion is about and to the extent that we can understand the previous section on religious art as the celebration of the Absolute as predicated into individual, sculpted human form, we can see the death of Christ as the death of (classical) art (see Reid, "The Death of God and the Ends of Art," 2020). Only through his "having been" (M763/W3, 555) is absolute essence (meaning) revealed, and does the man/god as body/sign become the vanishing word. This is the theme of the paragraph M763: absolute essence (meaning) is revealed when "God" who is "thus sensually present" in the form of "this individual man" ceases to be apprehended "as a sensuous existence" and "passes over into 'having been.'" *Sein* becomes *gewesensein*, in a semantic ambiguity that allows Hegel to play on the "having been" as the source of revealed essence, where, indeed, *Wesen ist gewesen*. It is in the "vanishing of immediate existence" that "He has arisen in Spirit."

The "vanishing" (*Verschwinden*) (M763) that Hegel refers to here is that of the "sensuous existence" of the body/sign, which takes place in the word as always already "having been." The essential vanishing of the word, which arises as spirit, is emphasized further on, in M770 (W3, 559). There, the word is first distinguished from the body/sign of the speaker (Christ), which is "left behind, externalized and emptied." The word, on the other hand, bespeaks the "dissolution" of the distinction between being and essence. As vanishing, it is essential or, in our terms, meaningful.

Throughout our discussion, we have seen how the essential vanishing of words is a condition for meaning, and further, for communal/societal forms that arise out of meaning's essential ambiguity. In religion, such forms can be

conceived as communal forms of worship, onto-grammatical instantiations of the copulative relation between the human and the divine (aka the Absolute). In Revealed Religion, the onto-grammatical communal form arises out of the Word as vanishing. "Spirit remains the immediate self of actuality [as human, historical, communal] but [now] as the *universal* self-consciousness of the community" (M763, my emphasis), one in which "absolute spirit is the content" (M766/W3, 557). In reference to the vanishing Word, Hegel makes the crucial distinction: whereas "the death of the divine man" (M784/W3, 570), [taken] as the "abstract negativity" of natural death, ends only in the "*natural* universality" [my emphasis] of the species, "death loses this natural meaning in spiritual self-consciousness" (ibid.). Indeed, death, as the essential vanishing of the Word,

becomes transfigured from its immediate meaning, viz. the non-being of this particular individual, into the universality of spirit who dwells in his community, dies in it every day and is daily resurrected. (ibid.)

The onto-grammatical community of the Word, taken as absolute essence (meaning), is one whose truth is spirit, where the natural individuality of linguistic signs is "daily resurrected" as meaningful words. Of course, we can understand the "essential vanishing" as the promise of resurrection offered to members of the community of belief. However, I believe that it should be taken, above all, as a form of worship where absolute meaning comes into play.

The question that arises, however, is this: how can such a community of belief be informed by absolute meaning without being totalizing, tribal, unilateral, and undifferentiated, as we have witnessed in other forms of (human) spirit, determined, for example, by the "Yes" of reconciliation, where "the I is we and the we is I" or, indeed, the Roman world of indifference, in which Revealed Religion appears? The answer is that here, specifically in the form of Revealed Religion, the form of communal worship that arises is informed by the most fundamental difference imaginable, one where the revelatory agency of the Absolute *is* absolute otherness. This is the case in the binarily differentiated, tragic world of *Antigone* as it is now, in Revealed Religion. In each case, the relatively rich speculative nature of the community is instantiated in the hermeneutical openness of its performative language. In one case, Sophocles' tragedy; in the other, the Gospels of the New Testament. Both are endlessly open to interpretation through the fundamental interplay between human reason and divine (absolute) revelation. Of course, as we have also seen, the strictly binary difference of Greek tragedy, devoid of copulative mediation, readily collapses into Roman in-difference.

Before further examining the language of the communal structure of worship that Hegel presents in Revealed Religion, that is, the language of representation (*Vorstellung*), I want to call attention to earlier discussions that arose regarding the ambiguous translation of both *Einzelne/Einzelheit* and *Individuum/Individualität* as the English term "individual." I have remarked that Hegel tends to use the latter when he is discussing "particular individuality," that is, a reality where specific properties and qualities are meant to ensure the perdurance of the entity in

question. On the other hand, the term *Einzel* and its derivatives tend to arise when juxtaposed with *Allgemeinheit* or universality (or generality). While the distinction is not hard and fast, it appears that when singularity is involved in the dialectical process whereby it reveals its truth as essentially vanishing, then Hegel tends to use the term *Einzelheit*. Such is the case when singularity vanishes either directly into empty universality, as we saw in Sense-certainty, or when it is absorbed into the particular generality of a community, as we see here in Revealed Religion. Thus, when presenting the Roman “demos” as made up of “petulant and bitter” individualities, Hegel uses the term *Individualität*. However, when presenting the death of the “divine man” and his resurrection in spirit, he uses the term (throughout Revealed Religion) *Einzel*, and so on. For example, in M763, “This individual man... which absolute essence has revealed itself to be” should read, “this singular man...”

Conversely, whereas the vanishing of the “singular man” reveals “absolute essence” or meaning, the *Individualität* of the heroes and statues of *Kunstreligion* are only attached to essence or meaning in a “superficial” and “arbitrary” (M741/W3, 540) way. Thus, the heroes possess “a single property” (M744/W3, 541) that is arbitrarily assigned to them, under their unchanging masks, which represent fixed signs of their meaning. Onto-grammatically, we can say that, as *Individualitäten*, the heroic statues are signs and not words. The movement from *individual* sign to *singular* word marks the end of art and the beginning of revealed religion, where the individual man/god becomes singular and absolutely essential or meaningful through his vanishing. Ultimately, the fate of the singular god/man qua spirit reveals to us its full conceptual potential: the singular/universal that is realized syllogistically in the holistic narrative of philosophical Science, as prefigured in Absolute Knowing. *Individualität* per se can never attain these speculative heights. By using the term *Einzel* to describe “this community as spirit” (M763), Hegel is signaling its *singular* speculative openness.

As I wrote above, the speculative openness of the community of religious belief, as presented in the Religion chapter, is afforded by the absolute otherness that is at play there. The singular unity of the community is not limited to the affirmative “Yes!” of unilateral human spirit, which we encountered in Morality, nor to the indifference of the Roman world, but now represents the affirmation of the identity of identity and difference as the locus of interplay between the human and the divine in worship. In Hegel’s words, and simply put, we comprehend that “the divine nature is the same as the human, and it is this unity that is beheld” (M759/W3, 552). For this truth to come about, we must grasp its speculative nature: what was earlier the substance/predicate of human spirit/reason is now taken as the revelatory, absolute Subject. But also, the human *words* of worship bespeak the subjective agency of *human* spirit. Briefly, words of human worship, such as “the Good, the Righteous, the Holy, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and so on,” when taken as words and not merely as signs, “are [at the same time] predicates of [the absolute] Subject” (ibid.).

This speculative truth is not immediately apparent either in the consciousness of the worshippers or, one supposes, in those outside the community of shared

belief. It is rather a truth that is for us, speculative philosophers, and, as such, a truth that is afforded by the narrative closure of Absolute Knowing. For it is in the final chapter that truth is presented as the reconciliation of reason qua human spirit and the revelatory agency of the Absolute. It is this truth that allows us to see the form of worship engendered in Revealed Religion for what it is: speculatively open. Without the realization of this truth, the human agency of reason (qua spirit) and absolute revelation remain unreconciled in the *actuality* of the unhappy consciousness that characterizes, for Hegel, the modern condition that I referred to near the beginning of Revealed Religion. It is the actuality of this condition that the conscience of Science feels its duty to overcome, as we discovered at the end of Chapter 6.

Throughout our investigation into Hegel's Religion, we have seen how forms of worship (where the divine and the human inform one another) are linguistic in an onto-grammatical sense. We have discussed oracular pronouncements, hymn-singing, epics, tragedy, and comedy in this light. What actual linguistic form does the onto-grammatical reality of worship take in Revealed Religion? The response to this question lies in the following crucial point, that representation (*Vorstellung*, tendentiously translated as "picture-thinking") is above all a form of language. In order to actually *be* something, *Vorstellung* exists as language: "the external existence of this *Vorstellung* [is] language" (M729/W3, 530). Only when we understand this fact do we see how the language of religion, the actual words of its doctrines, can form the onto-grammatical reality of its community of worship. Further, it is the (veiled) speculative nature of such language that raises it above unilateral expressions of shared belief. In other words, the inherent speculative nature of *Vorstellung* allows the community to become a church, an institution built around the variegated ambiguity of its doctrines. Most of the paragraphs of Revealed Religion deal, in some way, with the language of *Vorstellung*, with how it should be grasped speculatively but in a way that respects its specificity, that is, without it actually being carried over "into the realm of thought" and the scientific language "of the concept" (M776/W3, 562).

In this sense, if every time we come across "picture-thinking" in Miller's translation, we read "the language of representation" or "representational language," we come much closer to grasping Hegel's meaning in Revealed Religion. For example, the opening of M765 (W3, 556) now reads, "This form of representational language (*des Vorstellens*) constitutes the specific mode in which spirit, in this community [of belief], becomes aware of itself." We thereby understand how the doctrinal language of Christianity, and its narratives of "Good, the Righteous, the Holy, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and so on" (M759), can form the linguistic content of worship, that is, "the life of the community" (M766/W3, 557) itself. Similarly, when we read that "the representational language of the religious community is not [yet] speculative thinking" (M771/W3, 559), we see how the distinction between the two realms exists in their distinct forms of language.

It is simply too easy and convenient to dismiss Religion in the *Phenomenology* because of what it is not, that is, not "conceptual" and philosophical. However, by

doing so, we miss the important point regarding the speculative content of religion's representational language and how its very openness allows it to be hermeneutically interpreted in terms of speculative science itself. More simply, human spirit can recognize itself in the religious language of revelation because that language itself embodies the openness of identity and difference. In fact, once again, much of the Revealed Religion section consists in Hegel showing how the doctrinal narrative of Christianity *is* speculative: how the trinitarian structure of the narrative (with its terms of "father," "son," "creation," "Lucifer," "the fall," etc.) should be interpreted as language representing pure thought in its necessarily conceptual movement: from identity, into natural otherness and "back" to *now* differentiated identity through the agencies of spirit, which turn out to be *both* absolute and human. Nonetheless, if the story stopped here, in the religious language of representation, then such human-divine self-recognition would be impossible. It is only afforded in the final chapter, in Absolute Knowing, where we come to appreciate, that "the divine nature is the same as the human, and it is this unity that is beheld" (M759). Put another way, the meaning of religion is revealed in philosophy. In onto-grammatical terms, the absolute meaning of representational religious discourse is revealed because philosophy grasps religion's words of worship as *vanishing*.

Nonetheless, it is one of the features of representational language that it resists vanishing. It tries to set its meaning in stone, unilaterally closed to foreign interpretation. Indeed, such doctrinal language tends to be dogmatic or doctrinal in the heteronomous sense of the word: doctrine denotes "positivity," as Hegel puts it in his early writings. Conversely, what we are discussing in Hegel's Revealed Religion, in terms of the complicity between human spirit and absolute revelation, is the idea that the supposed positivity of religion is not heteronomous but is, in fact, partaking in and of free selfhood. The representational language of religion, left on its own, without the help of speculative philosophy, does not get this.

More specifically, the problem with representational language is that it relies on a form of judgment that arises from the (Kantian) understanding, where "the 'is' that forms its copula," Hegel writes, is "lifeless" (M781/W3, 568). The latter term is significant onto-grammatically because what characterizes the "life" of the copula is the lively interplay between identity and difference, where meaning arises as "having been," that is, as a feature of vanishing. To say, therefore, that the copula is "lifeless" is to say that meaning and sign (selfhood and nature; soul and body) are kept apart and language is maintained in a zombie-like state of waking death. Thus, in the judgments of representational language, nature and essence (sign and meaning) are not treated as "annulled/suspended moments" but rather as fixed and "clinging to the 'is'" (M780).

Judging, as carried out by the *Verstand* and iterated in the language of representation, does not take its subject-predicate terms as "transient moments" (M771/W3, 559) but rather posits them as "isolated immovable substances [i.e. predicates] or subjects" (ibid.). When articulated in the "medium" of representational language, meaning and the natural reality of linguistic signs appear "as completely independent sides which are [only] externally connected with each other" (M765/W3, 556).

The speculative truth that lies inchoate (and *for us*) within the language of representation (in the language of revealed religion) may not be apparent to itself, but it is already realized in the narrative completion of absolute knowing, where the filling of the copula arises as self-knowing spirit, that is, as the mutual and reciprocal self-consciousness of the human and the Absolute. This holistic view sees the separate moments of religious judgment (*Vorstellung*) for what they are: moments whose vanishing words arise as essence/meaning. In a clear statement of the speculative, inherently ambiguous nature of the copula, Hegel describes the move from the language of representation to that of science in these terms:

What is [truly] expressed in the content is that each part of the language of representation here receives the opposite meaning to what it had before; each meaning thereby completes itself in the other. (M782/W3, 569)

Such ambiguity heralds the speculative grasp of language, where “the abstract forms of ‘the same’ and ‘not the same,’ of ‘identity’ and ‘non-identity’ [are] reduced to moments” (M783).

The actual community of shared belief that arises, as a form of worship instantiated by the language of religious representation, may be the theatre where dialogical ambiguity between the human and the divine is performed, but it “is not yet fulfilled” (M787/W3, 573) speculatively. The religious community does not know itself as the reciprocal self-consciousness of the absolute Other. Communal, religious worship “does not [yet] possess the consciousness of what it is” (*ibid.*), and that is because the form of its shared doctrinal language still presents it with the diremption between “being [*Seins*] and thought” (M765), that is, between sign and signified, which translates into “an unreconciled split into a Here and a Beyond” (*ibid.*). This unreconciled opposition, which Hegel presents to us in the clear onto-grammatical terms of predicative judgment, bespeaks the actuality of unhappy consciousness and, consequently, of the modern unhappy condition.

The move to speculative language and the copulative fulfillment of judgment’s inherent ambiguity can be seen to anticipate another form of community, one of shared hermeneutical openness. What form might such a community take, one instantiated by the shared language of speculative science? The final chapter, “Absolute Knowing,” will give us a glimpse of such an onto-grammatical reality.

Chapter 8

ABSOLUTE KNOWING: HERMENEUTICAL OPENNESS AND SCIENCE

I have discussed Hegel's Religion chapter as presenting the revelatory agency of the Absolute, and, as such, as reflecting a distinctly different perspective from that presented in the first six chapters, which tell the tale from the point of view of human agency qua spirit. Briefly, the two points of view may be understood as reflecting both the knowing agency of reason (i.e., spirit) and that of revelation (i.e., absolute spirit). Of course, the two points of view are complicit. If indeed it is absolute knowing that we are after, then such knowledge must involve the realization that the human and the Absolute know themselves through each other.

Absolute Knowing, the final chapter, begins with a summary of the *Phenomenological* movement of the first six chapters, on (human) spirit (M788-93) and then switches perspectives (M794/W3, 579), in order to present "the other side" (ibid.), which is that of revelation or "religious spirit" (ibid.). What is at stake, in Absolute Knowing, is the "unification of the two sides" (ibid.). In fact, Hegel assures us, such a unification is already present in Revealed Religion, where the communally celebrated language of worship instantiates a reality in which the human and the Absolute are reciprocally recognized. The problem, however, as we saw, is the speculative insufficiency of such language, which Hegel qualifies as "representational," taking place in the key of *Vorstellung*, which is again tendentiously translated as "picture-thinking" (M795). As we saw, the language of representation persists in dividing the word into sign and signified, while sending the latter into an endlessly deferred Beyond. Briefly, the representational language of Revealed Religion tends to take the (vanishing) word that is Christ as a linguistic sign, fixed in positive doctrine that can only point to an ever-absent meaning.

In the context of representational language, the best form of worship that the unification between reason and revelation may achieve is one of immediate feeling or intuition, which Hegel presents here as the Beautiful Soul: "not only the intuition of the divine but the divine's intuition of itself" (M795). In order for such immediate certainty to prove itself to be *true*, it must move beyond intuition and espouse the conceptual movement that Hegel articulates in terms of the syllogism: "the movement of the universal through [particular] determination to singularity [*Einzelheit*, not 'individuality'] as also the reverse movement" (M789/W3, 576).

The syllogistic movement of the concept, including its “reverse movement,” articulates the speculative linguistic reality that I have been insisting upon from the outset, where the subjective agency, the counter-thrust (M60/W3, 58 [*Gegenstoss*]) of the substantial predicate, is heard and recognized. According to this speculative reversal, “the transformation of that which is in-itself into that which is for itself, of substance into subject” (M802/W3, 585), reflects back on what was taken hitherto as subject, so that “this subject is [now] just as much [predicated] substance” (M803). This reciprocal unification, grasped according to the concept, takes us from Religion to Science, a new “form of objectivity” (M798/W3, 582), “an element of existence” (*ibid.*), that has “come on the scene,” as Hegel writes in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology* (M76/W3, 70). The “meaningful appearing [*erscheinend*]” or phenomenon of Science, emphasized in M798, bespeaks its linguistic nature or rather, its onto-grammatical reality, which Hegel describes significantly as an “iterated movement” (*ausgesprochene Bewegung*, M799).

The grammatical ontology of Science is what distinguishes it from Religion, a distinction that must not be seen in terms of style or literary form as distinct from a common content that the two expressions of absolute spirit might well share. Indeed, in Science, there is no longer a division between language and content, as was effectively the case in representation (*Vorstellung*). The *speculative* language of Science is “fulfilled” (M801), and this is the case precisely because the copula in the infinite (reflective) judgment between subject and substance is now the actual ground of speculative meaning. In other words, the copula is the actual, existing space for essential determinacy, the endlessly ambiguous middle term of Hegel’s syllogistic articulation of the concept. It is this articulation that will define the post-*Phenomenological Encyclopedic* system, with its *Logics* (Universality of thought), *Philosophy of Nature* (determinate Particularity), and *Philosophy of Spirit* (reconciling Singularity).

Through our investigation into the odyssey of human spirit, as recounted in the first six chapters of the *Phenomenology*, I repeatedly referred to forms of unhappy consciousness as symptomatic of the modern condition. Such a condition reflects a fundamental opposition that may be defined in terms of immanence and transcendence, of being and essence, of body and soul. In Hegel, this modern condition is related to Kantian *Verstand* (understanding), a form of consciousness where the opposition between faith and knowing has reached such critical proportions that it demands reconciliation. Indeed, the entire *Phenomenological* project should be seen as carrying out this mission of reconciliation through its examination of reason and revelation, in the forms of human and then absolute spirit.

Against this happy, Scientific outcome, the modern culture of *Verstand*, we also saw, defines what Hegel refers to as actuality (*Wirklichkeit*): reason’s never-ending quest to reunite with the essential truth that it intuitively and immediately feels but can never attain because its fundamental skepticism condemns it to purely finite, empirical knowledge. The unhappy condition of spirit ends in the endless casuistry of morality, where the language of confession is just as arbitrary as that of

judgment. In judging, I confess and in confessing, I judge. Both propositions are iterations of the vain $I = I$, and the communities that arise in this onto-grammatical condition can do no better than instantiate the formal identity of such an empty linguistic structure.

The religious story of revelation, that is, of absolute spirit in its “new” substantial agency, fares no better than does the story of human reason when left on its own, and in fact, ends in the same figure of unhappy consciousness that Hegel associates with Christianity generally, that is, in its fundamentally romantic striving for lost essence, for the Truth alienated through the death of (the son of) God. As we see in the story of human spirit (reason), absolute agency, on its own, gives onto a form of worship that can never get beyond the community of shared belief, whose performative doctrines are positive (i.e., dogmatic) and not truly speculative. Of course, what is missing from both the human (reason) and absolute (revelation) accounts is their reconciliation: the speculative truth that neither subject predicating substance nor substance predicating subject is true. Each must involve the other in order to form a speculative proposition where the copula is fulfilled with the hermeneutical ambiguity of identity and difference. Consequently, Hegel sees Science not only as overcoming the *epistemological* crisis of *Verstand*, and its binary logic of intuition versus judgment, but as the actual solution to the aporia of the modern condition. Further, since the modern condition instantiates itself in deficient figures of onto-grammatical community, we see how Science carries with it an ethical/political vocation as well: the constitution of a human community whose performative verb involves an identity that is thoroughly enlivened by constitutive difference.

Above, near the beginning of Religion, I mentioned the idea that the onto-grammatical community of Science is, first and foremost, realized in the state university. I am aware that the University of Berlin, arguably the first modern state-founded university per se, would come into existence only several years after the publication of the *Phenomenology*. However, the idea of such an institution of learning, as a state institution within a constitutional democracy, was already afoot, and indeed had been actualized in the *Grandes Ecoles* system of Napoleonic France. In my article “Hegel and the State University” (Reid, 2000), I show how Hegel’s conception of the modern university as a corporative institution within the organic state is radically different from the Fichtean vision of that institution as the ideal embodiment of Germanic nationhood in its cultural vocation. Indeed, Fichte’s vision is somewhat echoed decades later in Heidegger’s effusions on the nationalistic mission of the university in Nazi Germany. These latter ideas of the university as the ideological spearhead of the people (*Volk*) present the institution as a uniform body of shared belief, a self-identical community that is the very opposite of the one that I have been taking pains to present as Hegel’s: an organic, inwardly articulated but externally open community of identity and difference, a hermeneutically ambiguous community arising from the speculative copula that animates it. The very fact that, for Hegel, the university is meant to form an actual corporative organ within the body politic guards against the folly of seeing it as the ideal soul of national *Bildung*.

Hegel's idea of the state university is indeed essentially involved in *Bildung*, however, not in the sense of the cultural manifest-destiny of a people or nation. Rather, as I outline in the above-mentioned article, university *Bildung*, for Hegel, is fundamentally educational, a mission that is carried out only through the differentiated educational institutions of the organic state, first through the pre-university, public school system and then in the university itself, where civil servants and other members of civil society learn law, medicine, histories, and so on. The goal is not only to produce an enlightened civil service, on the model of the highly effective Napoleonic state, but to educate citizens to the essential nature of their mission: freedom. And freedom, for Hegel, is institutional. Briefly, it is only actual and concrete when citizens recognize themselves (as free) in their institutions (of freedom). The healthy state consequently involves lively institutions, ones that are creatures of speculative language, of identity and difference, and whose identities remain ambiguous and open to hermeneutical interpretation. Institutional fatigue sets in only when comedic worlds of indifference have become tired of ambiguity. Then, the language becomes one of pure identity, what the French refer to, tellingly, as institutional, jargon-heavy *langues de bois* (wooden languages).

How do we get from Absolute Knowing to the state university? The key is in Hegel's repeated references to Science, in this final chapter. We know, by looking ahead at the *Encyclopedic* system of *Logic*, *Philosophy of Nature*, and *Philosophy of Spirit*, that Science articulates itself syllogistically, in a way where the Universal will give onto the Particular, only to be reconciled in the Singularity of the system (Science). And we know that the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, as a teaching manual, is meant to reflect (philosophically) upon, inform, and be informed by all the content produced in the university faculties of theology, medicine, and law. Further, we know that the "real words" of Science derive their objective truth from the speculative discourses of its content (e.g., law, histories of art, religion, constitutions, the natural sciences), upon which Science must reflect (see Reid, *Real Words*, 2007). The question remains: how do we get to the actual body of Science and its teaching, from Science as it appears in the *Phenomenology's* Absolute Knowing? How does "Science" become embodied in the *Encyclopedic* discourse of the state university?

To answer this crucial question, we begin by signaling an essential differentiation discovered in Hegel's presentation of Science in Absolute Knowing. On one hand, Science appears there as a kind of inner wisdom, as absolute knowing itself, that is, as the hard-earned knowledge that subject is substance, that reason is revelation, and that the human and the Absolute know themselves through each other. This knowledge is inherently speculative. It is both "the intuition of the divine [and] the divine's intuition of itself" (M795/W3, 579). The "pure inwardness" (*ibid.*) or immediacy of this absolute intuition allows Hegel to associate it with the "beautiful soul" (*ibid.*): a fully speculative intuition, one that is *certain* of the complicit interplay between reason and revelation. As such, it is deeply ambiguous, as was the figure of the beautiful soul that we encountered earlier, in *Morality* (M658/W3, 483). The difference between the two presentations is that here, in Absolute Knowing, the beautiful soul is the intuition of Science itself, and no longer exclusively that

of the modern moral individual. Of course, what is shared by both figures of the beautiful soul is their “vanishing” (M658, M795), their terminal nature. Indeed, as the singular knowledge of pure ambiguity, of identity and difference, where subject *is* predicate and vice versa, the beautiful soul is the personification of pure meaning, of absolute wisdom. As such, it can do nothing but outstrip its own figure, and vanish. This truth is the realized fruit of our *Phenomenological* journey, and which Hegel expresses in fittingly Aristotelian language (as he does at the end of the *Encyclopedia*): “Knowing is this seeming inactivity which merely contemplates how what is differentiated spontaneously moves in its own self and returns into its unity” (M804/W3, 587). Such contemplative wisdom is timeless, or rather occurs in the eternal “now” where the “form of time” is “annulled” or “set aside” (M801/W3, 584).

On the other hand, over against this immediate expression of eternally self-contemplative wisdom, absolute knowing qua Science must “also positively externalize itself” (M795/W3, 579), announces Hegel. Science must actually *be*, and thus must actually exist *in time*. In other words, since “to each abstract moment of Science corresponds a shape of manifest [human/absolute] spirit as such” (M805), the same, we can conclude, must be true of Science itself, whose “abstract moment” must also have its external “shape.” For, “just as Spirit *in its existence* is not richer than Science, so too it is not poorer” (M805). Science must articulate itself, must iterate itself. It must release itself from the “pure inwardness” (M795) of its own selfhood and speak out. Science must “release itself” in a form that is “the supreme freedom and assurance of its self-knowledge” (M806/W3, 589). Science’s existing self-articulation, as the speculative reality of the copulative interplay between subject and predicate (between reason and revelation), is fully onto-grammatical. Science takes place in language; to *be*, it must be language, and the actual language of Science, as “manifest [absolute] spirit” (M805), *is* the scientific community of the state university, the performative reality of the logos, whose verb is meant to inform, through *Bildung*, the organic state as a whole.

Of course, an argument can be made that the “spirit” Hegel is referring to here refers exclusively to the past forms that we have visited in the *Phenomenology* and not to the existing spirit of *Encyclopedic Science* qua the university. Indeed, when Hegel refers, in the final paragraph of Absolute Knowing to “History ... as spirit emptied out into time” (M808/W3, 590), he is clearly recalling the *Phenomenological* odyssey. However, this objection is not really one at all, since much of Science’s pedagogical content, in the subsequent *Encyclopedia*, consists largely in re-presenting the histories of culture, politics, art, and religion that are outlined in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Nonetheless, while the spiritual “histories” may be the same in both contexts, their treatment, in Science (i.e., in the *Encyclopedia*), is radically different from what we witness in the *Phenomenology*. Hegel specifically makes this distinction, in Absolute Knowing, when he states that, in *Encyclopedic Science*, the moments of spirit “no longer exhibit themselves as specific shapes of consciousness, but ... as specific concepts and as their organic self-grounded movement” (M805).

Put differently, even if the same shapes of Spirit are to be revisited in Science, the onto-logic of their unfolding is not driven by the self-overcoming dialectic of consciousness itself but by the actual articulations of self-differentiating, self-reconciling thought, aka the concept. According to this narrative logic, all Hegel has to do in order to bring about the *Encyclopedia* system is introduce its first moment, the *Logic*, as pure thought, pure essence (*Wesen als gewesen*), that is, pure meaning. The rest of the system will deduce itself, not because of some spooky pre-determination but because the complete speculative sentence is already presupposed; it has already been demonstrated as the absolute wisdom (aka absolute knowing) attained by the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Thus, the articulations of the *Encyclopedia* take place within the framework of speculative language, where the copulative “is” no longer expresses different forms of failed identity. Sophistical attempts to hang on to and to cement linguistic signs in their unilateral, enduring signification have collapsed into the truth of vanishing words as pure meaning, whose first expression is the *Logic*.

The two facets of Science presented by Hegel in Absolute Knowing therefore anticipate its *Encyclopedic* instantiation in the state university community, where the inward-leaning contemplation of the Truth takes on actual existence. Further, since that institution is determinant, as the *actus* of the state's entire education system and the *Bildung* of its citizens, the speculative discourse of Science is meant to resonate out into the actual, societal formation of the organic state itself, through its other institutions of civil society.

The “two sides” (M794, 795) of Science, the fact that it is both timeless wisdom and its temporal teaching and learning, allow us to read Absolute Knowing as an expression of philosophy, and thus to see it as the culminating element of what Hegel presents under the title of Absolute Spirit in the final book of the *Encyclopedia*. Consequently, in this light, we can comprehend the last chapter of the *Phenomenology* as the outcome of the progression that we followed through Chapter 7, on Religion, where Hegel presented the first two forms of absolute spirit (M678/W3, 497) in art and then in revealed religion. Philosophy, the apparently missing third form of absolute spirit, takes place in Absolute Knowing. Seeing absolute knowing as philosophy and thus as the culminating moment of absolute spirit allows us to understand it as the temporal, actual, externalized “side” of Science, one which is not alien to its inner wisdom but rather the linguistic expression of it. Comprehending Absolute Knowing as carrying out the philosophical conclusion of the project undertaken in art and religion consequently allows us to comprehend it as a form of worship.

Through our discussion of the Religion chapter, I introduced the Hegelian notion of worship (*Cultus*), as the form of communal celebration where the human and the divine (qua Absolute) commingle in reciprocal self-knowing. In this sense, worship is inherently speculative, because it performs the lively interplay between (human) spirit and its absolute Other. We saw how communities of worship were not restricted to the moment of revealed religion but rather could be found in forms of natural religion and in artistic representations (oracular, hymnal, tragic, sculptural, etc.). All these forms of absolute spirit (art and religion) involved

communal instances where human reason and absolute revelation participate in reciprocal self-knowledge, in the shared and yet differentiated copula of their reciprocal predication. Nonetheless, in spite of the inherently speculative nature of each form, we did witness a progression, from natural religion, through art, to Revealed Religion, a progression informed by the level of speculative difference admitted and acknowledged within each form of worship that we encountered. Whereas the religion of nature presented the revelatory agency of the Absolute as the virtually unilateral predication visited upon human spirit by what was formerly taken as substance (nature), revealed religion presented a form of worship where the human and the divine were at home together in a far more balanced fashion.

Further, we saw how each form of worship that we encountered in art and religion was the performative instantiation of a specific grammatical ontology, which, in each case, was observed in the more or less speculative nature of the copula. Each form had its limitations, dependent upon the successful integration of identity and difference at play therein, which I have defined in terms of hermeneutical openness or speculative difference. The limitations of each form of absolute spirit are thus reflected in its language of worship, and the penultimate form of absolute spirit that we visited, in Revealed Religion, was limited only by its reliance on the language of representation (*Vorstellung*), a language that tends to nail down meaning by confining it to a system of static signs and, therefore, open to dogmatic predication and resistant to the vanishing quality that invites hermeneutical openness. If we take Absolute Knowing not only as a presentation of Science but also as philosophy (the third moment of absolute spirit), then, as language (logos) it should also have its form of worship. Absolute knowing must involve a form of communal celebration where the human (reason) commingles with the absolute (revelation), performed in a speculative language that is hermeneutically open. I maintain that, for Hegel, the highest form of worship takes place in the university itself, that is, in the state university that is fully informed by its philosophical verb or rather, by the speculative copula of Science.

We have seen how “vanishing” involves the informative investment of linguistic signs, which Hegel understands as natural, enduring, contingent entities. Like the things of nature that they resemble in their immediacy, linguistic signs tend to be fixed in arbitrary patterns determined by heteronomous laws. In overcoming signs to form *words*, thought breaks down and overwhelms the hard, natural permanence of linguistic signs, filling them with meanings that outstrip their bodily finitude. Such spilled meaning (essence) is the space for the hermeneutical openness that is fundamental to the discourse of Science and its philosophical celebration (worship) within the university.

In M807, Hegel presents the transition from signs to words in terms of the overcoming of natural contingency, in a movement that “produces [*herstellt*] the subject” in what appeared as the substance/predicate (*Natur*). In the context of Absolute Knowing, this predicative action bespeaks the subjective, revelatory agency of the Absolute, now reinstating itself in what was, for it, its substantial Other: human spirit in its contingent actuality. The movement is described as a “sacrifice” in the text because, in becoming “word,” the Absolute embodies itself,

predicates itself into (human) signs and surrenders to human finitude. In doing so, absolute spirit is “emptied out into time” (M808), and thus vanishes. Absolute spirit sacrifices itself in becoming the dying word but whose death is its very significance.

Such significance presents itself in the *Perfekt* tense of “having been.” History makes sense only when it is recollected, when the world “abandons its outer existence and gives its existential shape over to recollection” [*Erinnerung*] (M808), the memory of what has been. Only in such remembered form is “its vanished outer existence preserved” (ibid.). Science arises in the meaningful recollection of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*’s vanishing words. It is those words that we have read together and whose meaning now “foams forth” (M808) into the endlessly open, speculative sentence of *Encyclopedic Science*.

Triana, 2019

NOTES

Preface

- 1 Throughout this book, I will refer to A. V. Miller's translation, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), although sometimes modified. I will often relate cited passages to the edition of *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 3 [W3] edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), in order to situate the reader with respect to the German text. The page numbers of the *Werke* edition refer to the beginnings of the paragraphs in Miller's translation. I also capitalize the words "Phenomenological" and "Phenomenologist" when they refer to Hegel's book.

Chapter 1

- 1 I develop some of the linguistic and ethical aspects of this chapter in "Hegel and the Hobbesian Ethics of Sense-Certainty," *Epoché* 18.2 (Spring 2014), along with references to primary and secondary literature.

Chapter 2

- 1 David Hume, A., *Treatise of Human Nature*, edited with an introduction by Ernest C. Mossner (London: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 361.
- 2 Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, translated by Lynn Solotaroff (New York: Bantam Books, 1981).

Chapter 4

- 1 Though modified by me, translations of the *Encyclopedia's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* here and elsewhere are drawn from *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, translated by William Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971 [1894]).
- 2 See the chapter on Novalis in my book *The Anti-romantic: Hegel Against Ironic Romanticism* (2014). According to Hegel's diagnosis of the Romantic poet/philosopher, his death from "consumption" is the result of his self-consuming yearning. *Sehnsucht* becomes *Schwindsucht*.
- 3 He is all thought and no body. In the political sphere, the perfect politician often presents himself as disincarnated thought (freedom in a suit). Bodiliness (in the form of sexual misconduct or pecuniary corruption) might then be his downfall.
- 4 This is the general theme of John Russon's *Infinite Phenomenology* and an idea to which I heartily subscribe.

Chapter 6

- 1 In this chapter, I use the following abbreviations: *EL* = Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991) followed by the section number, and to *Werke* 8.
LR = Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, vol. 1, *Werke* 16.
LR 1984 = Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 1, edited by P. C. Hodgson, translated by R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, J. M. Stewart et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
OT = Immanuel Kant's essay, "What It Means to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" in I. Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, edited and translated by A. W. Wood and G. Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), followed by page reference to *Kants Werke, Akademie Textausgabe* (1902), vol. 8 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968).
MH = Moses Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence*, edited and translated by D. O. Dahlstrom and C. Dyck, *Studies in German Idealism* 12 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011).
CS = "Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza (1785)," *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, edited and translated by G. Di Giovanni (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).
- 2 Particularly, Mendelssohn's *Morning Hours* and his *To Lessing's Friends*.
- 3 For the "Orienting" essay, see *OT*: 3–18.
- 4 *CS*: 190.
- 5 *Ibid.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Other Voices

I do not intend this to be a bibliography in the normal, scholarly sense of the term. To cite every article and book that I have consulted, over the years, on the *Phenomenology* and its various parts and sections, would be tedious and unnecessary. Many of the secondary sources that I have consulted can be found in the references that I list below, under my name, in the “Works Cited” section. Immediately below, I do list those monographs that have been my constant companions while conceiving this book, the ones that were either on my desk or within easy grasp. The list may appear idiosyncratic. In fact, some of the books were chosen because I find them particularly insightful and enjoyable to read. Others I have chosen because their approach to Hegel is so different from, and even opposed to, mine! A few books were included principally because they themselves seem to have been forgotten, become words that have not altogether vanished.

G.-H. Falke, *Begriffene Geschichte. Das historische substrat und die systematische Anordnung der Bewusstseingestellten in Hegels “Phänomenologie des Geistes.” Interpretation und Kommentar* (Berlin: Lukas, 1996).

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- Merold Westphal, *History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978).

I also include two crucial references on Hegel's "speculative sentence." Jere Surber's pioneering article, "Hegel's Speculative Sentence," *Hegel-Studien*, 1975 and Catherine Malabou's inspiring *Plasticité, temporalité et dialectique* (Paris: Vrin, 1996). While neither, to my knowledge, employs the expression "onto-grammatical," I find their readings of the speculative sentence section of the *Phenomenology's* Preface amicable to my enterprise.

Works by Hegel

- Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, translated by William Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971 [1894]).
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